THE LIFE OF REV. ORANGE SCOTT:

A History and Analysis of Abolitionism and Wesleyan Methodism in Antebellum America, 1800-1847

by

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Dissertation **approved:**

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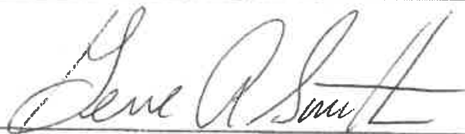

For the AddRan College of Liberal and Fine Arts

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ABSTRACT

THE LIFE OF REV. ORANGE SCOTT:

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This work is an intellectual biography of Orange Scott, an antislavery Methodist minister who seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery and church government in 1842 and then founded the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1843. A largely obscure and forgotten abolitionist, this work chronicles his life and restores his place as an important figure in the antislavery movement. He championed a unique antislavery worldview that was simultaneously conservative and radical. Shaped by both Garrisonian abolitionism and John Wesley, Scott presented this worldview as the best solution to moral corruption in society. He further refined it over the course of his life through a series of three interconnected debates: a theological debate with Thomas Whittemore over universal salvation, a debate with fellow Methodists over slavery, and a debate with William Lloyd Garrison over non-resistance. Each of these debates illustrates a different dimension of Scott's worldview: his traditionalist theology, his radical brand of antislavery Methodism, and his conservative defense of civil society. His conservatism rested on his desire to conserve the pure principles of the past and preserve the institutions that represented those principles. His radicalism stemmed from an aggressive opposition to an existing *status quo*

that had abandoned first principles and had corrupted society. By agitating against slavery, Scott forced American Methodism to confront its relationship with the South's peculiar institution and its departure from the ground originally occupied by John Wesley and Francis Asbury. By holding a mirror up to the Methodist Episcopal Church and galvanizing abolitionism and antislavery sentiment inside the church, Scott greatly contributed to the division of the largest evangelical denomination in the United States. His leadership of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, best exemplified by his editorship of the *True Wesleyan* and his tenure as the denomination's book agent, helped turn it into a viable alternative to his old church. In doing so, Scott shattered an anti-abolition consensus and forced northern Methodists to adapt to a new antislavery paradigm that helped split Methodism along geographic lines.

INTRODUCTION

On February 13, 1839, a day after celebrating his thirty-ninth birthday, Rev. Orange Scott, a Methodist minister stationed in Lowell, Massachusetts and a former presiding elder, wrote to the editor of the antislavery *Zion's Watchman*. Under the title "'A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand,'" he offered a meticulous response of over three columns to an anti-abolition sermon on Matthew 12:25. His article, which chronicled the contours of the debate over slavery within the Methodist Episcopal Church, encapsulated the perspective of Methodists in favor of immediate abolition. He declared:

> In this holy enterprise we have crossed the Rubicon, nailed our flag to the mast, and in our warfare against slavery, our motto is, 'victory or death!' If the church is not to be kept together by slavery, abolition will not divide it; but if *slavery* be our bond of union, no matter how soon we may fall to pieces. ... But one thing is certain; they [anti-abolition Methodists] will not seal our lips nor control our consciences. We shall 'speak as the tempest does, sterner and stronger.' We shall preach and pray; and in so doing, shall 'remember those in bonds as bound with them.' And if not permitted to do it in the church of our choice, we shall do it elsewhere.[1]

Scott's defiant remarks came four years into a divisive and destructive conflict within American Methodism over slavery, abolition, and race that culminated with the sundering of the largest evangelical denomination in the United States in 1844.

The collapse of American Methodism represented a crucial watershed moment in the history of the United States. It foreshadowed divisions within other Christian denominations over slavery and even the dissolution of the Union itself in 1860. But the split of Methodism into northern and southern churches in 1844 was preceded a year and a half earlier by a smaller and less studied – but equally significant – schism in November 1842 that culminated with the

[1] O. Scott, "'A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand.," *Zion's Watchman*, March 2, 1839, vol. 4, no. 9, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 10, 2022).

creation of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America in 1843. Without this earlier secession – the tremor before the earthquake – the Methodist Episcopal Church may have remained an anti-abolition stronghold. Abolitionism forced Methodists to grapple with their own history and legacy in a way many that in the church hierarchy had tried desperately to avoid for years. By the mid-1830s, however, there could be no hiding from that discussion.

Although this work is in part an examination into the split between Wesleyan and Episcopal Methodism, it is primarily an intellectual biography of one of Wesleyan Methodism's most prominent figures and arguably its prime mover, Orange Scott. Although an important player in one of the most consequential religious debates of his time and a leading abolitionist in New England, Scott has remained a largely obscure figure in historiographical literature. His first and only published biography was written by friend, protégé, and admirer Lucius C. Matlack in 1848. Since then, only Donald G. Mathews has given him a dedicated treatment in his 1965 article "Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary." In the nearly sixty years since Mathews' article appeared in Martin Duberman's *The Anti-Slavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, Scott has faded into the background and been relegated to passing mentions in works such as Manisha Sinha's *The Slave's Cause* and Molly Oshatz's *Slavery and Sin*. The only dedicated treatment of Scott in the years after Mathews's work came in the form of Heather Mills's 2000 thesis, *Orange Scott: A True Believer's Crusade Against Slavery*. Mills, however, discussed many of the same ideas and arguments first introduced by Mathews in 1965.[2]

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[2] Orange Scott and Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott Compiled from His Personal Narrative, Correspondence, and Other Authentic Sources of Information. In Two Parts* (New York: Published by C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack, at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, No. 5 Spruce Street, 1847). Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott Compiled from His Correspondence and Other Authentic Sources. In Two Parts* (New York: Published By C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, No. 5. Spruce Street, 1848). These works, Scott's autobiography and Matlack's biography, were published together by the Wesleyan Methodist Book Concern. Scott's autobiography is part one and Matlack's biography is part two. Subsequent references to Scott's autobiography will be under "The Life of Rev. Orange Scott" and Matlack's biography will be under "Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott." Donald G. Mathews, "Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary,"

This does not mean Scott has gone completely unstudied in those years. Most recently, in *Bonds of Salvation*, Ben Wright ably explored Orange Scott's struggle against slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and integrated his antislavery labors into a larger theoretical framework that can best be understood as a disagreement within antebellum American Christianity between what he termed "conversionists" and "purificationists." This framework suits Scott well by placing him within the twin worlds of religious history and antislavery history. Orange Scott was at once an evangelical Christian, a Garrisonian abolitionist, and a committed republican. What made him truly unique was the way he took these competing threads and embedded them within his own Wesleyan worldview. The historical legacy of Scott, his unique belief system, and the development of new historiographical literature all justify a renewed commitment to Scott and, through him, into the abolition Methodism he helped create.[3]

Lamenting that Scott had been relegated to little more than "a member of the supporting cast," Mathews instead concluded that he was "one of the most important men in the antislavery enterprise before 1845" and touted his "significant role as antislavery evangelist, as disturber of consciences, and as 'shaker of institutions.'" His excellent history of the struggle over slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845*, further cemented Scott's place as an important figure in that larger story. Mathews, however, ultimately relied on an assumption about Scott that this work challenges. To Mathews, Scott was not a "reformer"; he was instead a "revolutionary." This argument rested on two premises: Scott was revolutionary by what Mathews termed "implication" and, more

in *The Anti-Slavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, ed. Martin Duberman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 77-101. Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 253, 256, 472. Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight Against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 51; Heather Mills, "Orange Scott: A True Believer's Crusade Against Slavery, 1800-1847," (University of Winthrop, 2000).

[3] Ben Wright, *Bonds of Salvation: How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2020), 9-21. For Orange Scott, see Wright, *Bonds of Salvation*, 185-189.

persuasively, Scott was revolutionary according to R.R. Palmer's definition of the concept. Mathews' understanding of revolutionary "implication" assumed that since Scott wanted to abolish rather than reform slavery, he was implicitly revolutionizing every aspect of American society. This is certainly true, but also an extraordinarily broad definition of revolutionary to the point where generally conservative-minded people like a John Wesley or an Abraham Lincoln could fit under that moniker. As a result, this definition obscures as much as it clarifies. Mathews' second argument, the R.R. Palmer definition, contends that Scott was a revolutionary because he lost confidence in justice and authority, saw his obligations as impositions, and felt alienated from the national social contract. To make this point, Mathews placed considerable emphasis on Scott's semi-retirement in 1840-1842 that came during his nadir as an abolitionist. While Mathews is correct that Scott felt alienated from the institutions he loved, alienation was not his life's defining characteristic.[4]

For as simple and accessible as it was to ordinary people, Scott's worldview was extraordinarily complicated and sophisticated. This stemmed from the tangled intellectual web from which Scott drew his values and principles: the egalitarian impulses of William Lloyd Garrison, the religious passion of George Bourne, the moral imperative of Lydia Maria Child, the ministerial commitment of Amos A. Phelps, and, most importantly, the theological values and principles of John Wesley. Scott ably harnessed these sentiments and synthesized them into a singular worldview united around the simplicity and populism of primitive Wesleyanism. This abolition and evangelical worldview ultimately led him to embrace three central identities over the course of his life: the Christian, the abolitionist, and the American. Although he generally did not see these as being in opposition, his loyalty always flowed from Christian to American.

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[4] Donald G. Mathews, "Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary." In Martin Duberman, *The Anti-Slavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, 1965), 99-101.

Far from being either a radical revolutionary or a moderate reformer, Scott was something else entirely. While one could simply conclude that he was somehow both things at once, the truth is far more complex. This complexity gets to the root of why Orange Scott is an important historical figure and serves as one of the study's principal historiographical contributions: Scott challenges the way historians should approach radicalism and conservatism in antebellum America, especially with respect to American evangelicalism.

Rather than being two competing and irreconcilable forces, conservatism and radicalism should instead be viewed as means rather than ends. Instead of being a reflexive defense of the status quo and a deference to tradition or institutions, Scott's conservatism emphasized a reverence for principles and history. He did not eschew conservatism outright, only the way it manifested in his time as an excuse to tolerate injustice in the present. Likewise, Scott's radicalism did not hinge upon a novel reimagining of civil society and its institutions. Scott strongly opposed what Edmund Burke understood as the "spirit of innovation," the radical reimagining society by tearing down existing institutions and replacing them with novel, usually rationalistic, frameworks. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke quickly followed his critique of this innovation with a description of his own conservatism: "People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors."[5] This definition of conservatism fits Scott well. He was not as much an institutionalist as Burke, but he did not see institutions as interchangeable widgets to be discarded at whim. He looked to the past as a guide and a template for future success. His conservatism, then, rested on a desire to conserve

[5] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 29. As an example of the way radical revolution destroyed institutions through innovative change, Burke cited the "political men of letters" in France and Europe who had plotted "the destruction of the Christian religion." See Burke, *Reflections*, 73-74.

principles; his radicalism came from his zealous, aggressive, and occasionally revolutionary commitment to preserve the principles of the past that had been abandoned in his present.

Scott's worldview is further complicated by the fact that he was seen as simultaneously conservative and radical depending on the person being asked. To anti-abolition Methodists like Elijah Hedding and Nathan Bangs, Orange Scott was a fanatic, a schismatic, a revolutionary. Thomas Bond and Abel Stevens helped popularize the phrase "radico-abolition" against him and his allies.[6] Yet to the Universalist Thomas Whittemore and, eventually, to William Lloyd Garrison and his supporters, Scott was nothing more than a clerical conservative who sought to stifle reform and curtail true religion. Orange Scott, then, defies easy or simplistic categorization. This reality necessities a detailed examination into his worldview to understand what he believed, why he believed it, and why it mattered.

This work also builds on and engages with antebellum historiographical literature on American religion, evangelicalism, Methodism, religious hermeneutics, and abolitionism. Orange Scott's life touched on many of the events that shaped and dominated the Early Republic and antebellum eras: the Second Great Awakening, the struggle over slavery, the development and eventual dissolution of American Methodism, and the chaotic revolutions transforming the United States between 1790 and 1850. Among these, Scott's contributions to the historiographical understanding of religion and hermeneutics are especially enlightening. Orange Scott introduces further complexity into these stories, at once reinforcing and challenging what Mark Noll has termed the "reformed, literal hermeneutic" that became the norm in antebellum

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[6] For example, Bond referred to Scott's *American Wesleyan Observer* in 1843 as "a Radico-aboliton paper" and, during a debate with antislavery Methodist Phineas Crandall in 1846, reiterated that most of the followers of what he called "this 'ultra,' 'rabid,' 'radico' Abolitionism" had left the church to join "the Scottites." See "State of Things at Lowell.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, vol. 18, no. 6, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 16, 2023); "Rev. Mr. Crandall Versus Drs. Elliott and Bond.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, vol. 20, no. 30, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 16, 2023)

America. Noll argues that this hermeneutic combined a literal reading of the Bible, republican political values, and a commonsense moral reasoning tradition derived in part from the Scottish Enlightenment. For Noll, however, this hermeneutic helped fuel the tragedy of the Civil War by convincing proslavery and antislavery Christians that their opponents had distorted the Bible. This hermeneutic describes Scott well, but Scott understood these ideas quite differently than either his colleagues in antebellum America or Noll. In his examination into Methodism and the way Methodism embraced this hermeneutic, Noll emphasizes the contributions of Nathan Bangs, Wilbur Fisk, and Daniel Whedon. All three were adversaries of Orange Scott during the 1830s. While Scott's theology aligned well with what Noll considers the rival Methodist faction seeking to recapture Methodism's earlier emphasis on holiness, Scott does not neatly fit into that school either. His brand of religious evangelism and Wesleyan theology stressed holiness, but it also incorporated elements of the emerging hermeneutic, adapting it to suit his needs and worldview.[7]

The most noteworthy is the commonsense dimension. Unlike Whedon, Scott never rejected traditional Methodist teachings of original sin, atoning grace, or the need for God in conversion. Instead, Orange Scott was a popular preacher who emphasized mainstream evangelical themes of repentance, redemption, free will, and moral free agency. Yet he also employed what I term a self-evident biblical exegesis. Where the adherents of Noll's literal, reformed hermeneutic saw commonsense and republicanism as supplements, or even replacements, for traditional Christianity, Scott saw them as natural outgrowths. Scott, however, was not an intellectual. He was almost entirely self-educated and therefore adopted a commonsense understanding of issues out of the populist origins of Methodism itself. For him,

[7] Ben Wright, *Bonds of Salvation: How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisana State University Press, 2020), 9-21. Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 367-385. For Noll's examination into American Methodism, see Noll, *America's God*, 330-364.

moral truth, whether in politics, religion, or society, embodied the idea of *sola scriptura*: it could be understood by ordinary people. Simplicity was integral to this worldview. Whether in theology or slavery, Scott emphasized a worldview that rejected excessive complexity as obscuring obvious moral truths that could be gleaned from the plain text of the Bible, from the common sense of a regular person, and the self-evident truths of the American republic.

While Noll's hermeneutic partly explains Scott's commonsense theology, he most dramatically differs with Noll on the issue of slavery. According to Noll, the religious debate over slavery could be summarized by three major factions: a proslavery conservatism and its literal reading of the Bible; a radical abolition faction that accepted the Bible was proslavery and ultimately condemned it; and what he considers the "distraught" middle that could not reconcile its commitment to a literal reading of the Bible with its antislavery sensibilities. In Noll's view, this ultimately forced antislavery Christians to move down a path that resulted in liberal Protestantism. Molly Oshatz took Noll's claims even further in *Slavery and Sin* and arguably carried these assertions to their logical end. Primarily concerned with chronicling a group she identifies as antislavery "moderates," her work argues that these Christians ultimately rejected a literal reading of the Bible and replaced it with ideas that became the cornerstones of liberal Protestantism in the decades after the Civil War: the progressive unfolding of revelation through history, considerations of historical context for moral action, and a prioritization of experience over biblical text.[8]

Both Noll and Oshatz's argument rests on a singular premise: they conclude that the religious hermeneutic of the era inevitably supported a proslavery interpretation of the Bible. Oshatz explicitly embraces this perspective, engaging in a lengthy discussion in her introduction

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[8] Noll, *America's God*, 379-401. Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin*, 3-4, 100-118. For Oshatz's proslavery Bible argument, see *Slavery and Sin*, 5-10.

to prove the Old and New Testament were proslavery. Indeed, she does not even admit the possibility that the Bible could be abstractly antislavery in any meaningful capacity; when discussing the group that she identifies as "Christian abolitionists" – men like the Tappan brothers, Amos A. Phelps, and Theodore Dwight Weld – she dismisses their arguments with little more than the wave of the hand. "Christian abolitionists relied on weak, contorted, and highly selective biblical exegesis that was perfect fodder for proslavery cannons," she observed, adding that they were evidence of "the futility of using the letter of the Bible to support immediatism." These arguments, however, simply take proslavery advocates at their word that they had, as Oshatz put it, "quickly dismantled" Christian abolitionism.[9] Outside of a passing mention of Orange Scott as a Methodist supporter of abolitionism, Oshatz does not grapple with him or his worldview.

In part, this work challenges the assumption that proslavery Christians had the Bible on their side and could easily dispense with Christian abolitionism. Furthermore, Scott's life also challenges Oshatz's assertions about Christian abolitionists and antislavery moderates more broadly. Scott championed many ideas that were antithetical to postbellum liberal Protestantism: a more literal reading of the Bible, traditional Christian theology, and a belief that moral principles were absolute and unchanging throughout history. By contrast, anti-abolition Methodists did not find refuge in the Bible or a literal exegesis. Within the Methodist Episcopal Church at least, the opposite seems to be the case: proslavery Methodists certainly invoked the Bible on a very superficial level, but anti-abolition Methodists especially found themselves compelled to evade the Bible and their Wesleyan heritage. The force of abolition Methodist arguments, especially from Orange Scott, made the Bible untenable ground. Instead, as Donald

[9] Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin*, 45-46, 61-65.

G. Mathews ably argues in *Slavery and Methodism*, anti-abolition Methodists relied far more heavily on temperamentally conservative arguments than they did on the Bible.[10] Scott's biblical arguments were not complex or sophisticated – he simply called on Christians to remember those in bonds and let the oppressed go free – but that did not make his arguments any less effective or forceful.

In challenging Mathews's depiction of a revolutionary Orange Scott and the Noll-Oshatz paradigm of a proslavery Bible, I build on the recent scholarship of Ryan McIlhenny and his erudite biography of George Bourne, one of the four individuals who converted Scott to abolitionism. Bourne, according to McIlhenny, was both a radical and a conservative who wedded a traditionalist theology with an abolitionist worldview that combined antislavery and anti-Catholicism into a single framework opposed to slavery of body and soul. Moreover, McIlhenny deftly analyzes Bourne's sophisticated biblical arguments against slavery and illustrates that proslavery Christians did not have a monopoly on the Bible. Orange Scott was at once an abolitionist disciple of Bourne and a Methodist echo of him. It is likely Scott's own conception of a republican Wesley was forged in part by reading Bourne's biography of Methodism's founder. Yet while Scott shared much of Bourne's perspectives on slavery, race, and Catholicism, he never made anti-Catholicism a fixture of his worldview in the way that Bourne did. Scott instead opted to utilize "anti-popery" rhetoric to castigate what he saw as abuses of power inside the Methodist Episcopal Church. Where Bourne saw Catholicism as an imminent threat, Scott's relationship with the Catholic Church was far more complicated. While

[10] Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 124-130. These "High Methodist officials" as Mathews describes them relied primarily on challenging immediatism on grounds of expediency by questioning its feasibility and the potential southern reaction. As I illustrate in chapters 5 and 6, Wilbur Fisk and Daniel Whedon's intellectualist "Middletown Methodism" almost entirely avoided the Bible.

he certainly despised it, he saw it as little more than a somber cautionary tale for Protestants that warned them to never abandon first principles.[11]

Given his unabashedly populist bent, it is crucial that Scott be integrated into the historiographical literature on popular religion and religious democracy. Two works are especially significant: Nathan Hatch's *Democratization of American Christianity* and Sam Haselby's more recent *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*. Scott certainly embodies many aspects of the democratic spirit to American Christianity that Hatch outlines: energetic leadership, appeal to common people, movement-building, harmonization between clergy and laity, and little sense of their limitations. Scott, however, differs from many of the "insurgent" religious movements and leaders that Hatch discusses insofar as he did not champion what Hatch describes as "an overt rejection of the past as a repository of wisdom." Given that Scott emerged at the end of the period in Hatch's study, this incongruity is partly explained by Hatch himself: as the insurgent religious movements grew more popular and successful, they began to settle down and search for what both he and Mark Noll have understood as "respectability." Using Nathan Bangs as a case study, Hatch illustrates how Methodist leadership transitioned from itinerant revivalism and a populism of the alienated into a self-conscious establishment obsessed with being accepted into the cultural mainstream. In many respects, Scott was as much resisting this modern shift away from the past as he was the anti-abolitionism that symbolized it.[12]

Moreover, Scott also embodied much of what Hatch describes as a "populist hermeneutics" contingent on a uniquely Americanized application of sola scriptura and the

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[11] Ryan McIlhenny, *To Preach Deliverance to the Captives: Slavery and the Protestant Mind of George Bourne, 1780-1845* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 2020), 15-56. For McIlhenny's analysis of Bourne's biblical arguments, see McIlhenny, 147-185. For anti-Catholicism, see 186-217.

[12] Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 5-11, 201-207. Orange Scott is briefly mentioned in Hatch's chapter on "Democratic Dissent" and characterized along with La Roy Sunderland as "crusading abolitionists" and "dissenting charismatic leaders."

ability for common people to "think for themselves." Scott championed this brand of hermeneutics because he himself was a product of it: he was self-taught, he derived his religious convictions from private judgment and God, and his ideas were not molded by the dictates of an ecclesiastical class.[13] Sam Haselby, exploring the emergence of an American religious national identity in the years after the American Revolution, also touches on many of these same themes. For Haselby, tensions over westward expansion symbolized a larger religious struggle between what he identifies as "frontier revivalism and national evangelism." Although Haselby's study focuses on the western frontier, the same model can, in some respects, be applied to Orange Scott. Growing up in small towns in Vermont and Lower Canada, Scott spent most of his formative years in the hinterlands and along the regional periphery of New England. This adds greater complexity to Haselby's interesting analysis of the social forces at work in the Early Republic, revealing that dissension was not a neat geographical delineation between a popular western frontier Protestantism and what he calls the "Northeastern elite." Scott perfectly conforms to Haselby's class distinctions, with popular revivalists coming from migrants, small farmers, and people on the periphery.[14] This suggests that the struggle for religious identity was less between West and Northeast and more between periphery and core.

Haselby's analysis speaks to a central and recurring theme that characterized Scott's life: his debates often pitted him against the well-educated, the respectable, and the leaders in national evangelistic movements. Among his principal opponents, he debated doctors of divinity, college-educated intellectuals, university presidents, and advocates of missionary and colonization schemes. This contrast, however, was not necessarily unique to Scott himself. As David Hempton illustrates in *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, Methodism flourished when placed into

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[13] Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 179-182

[14] Sam Haselby, *Origins of American Religious Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-3.

opposition with prevailing social forces and powerful individuals.[15] Similarly, Scott thrived when he engaged in controversy and confrontation; he embraced debate and used it as an opportunity to present a clear, stark moral contrast between his vision and that of his opponents. Given the biographical importance to Scott and the general intellectual significance of controversy in Methodism, I approach Orange Scott's life through a series of three major debates that characterized his ministry and his antislavery career. The chapters that follow unfold along a roughly chronological sequence that recount Scott's life but are anchored to these three debates. Each clash speaks to a different side of Orange Scott and, when taken together, help present a composite portrait of his overarching worldview.

Chapter 1, however, examines Orange Scott's early years, beginning with his birth in Brookfield, Vermont and tracing his life through his conversion to Christianity at 20, his entry into Methodist itineracy, and his early years as a Methodist minister. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the first of the three debates in his life from 1826-1827. While stationed at Charlestown, Massachusetts, Scott engaged in a debate with Thomas Whittemore, an editor of the *Universalist Magazine*, over the doctrine of universal salvation. These chapters explore a completely unstudied episode in the history of religion in the Early Republic, reflecting the fundamental differences between Methodism and Universalism. During his debates with Whittemore, Scott articulated a traditionalistic Methodist theology that espoused a generally literal but fundamentally self-evident reading of the Bible and an orthodox and conservative theology that Scott explicitly juxtaposed with Whittemore's theological liberalism. This debate, however, did

[15] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale University Press, 2005). Hempton portrays Methodism as operating in "dialectical friction," namely the balancing of two competing and seemingly counterintuitive forces. In one such case, Hempton examines the way that opposition to Methodism helped pave the way for its eventual success. See Hempton, *Methodism*, 86-108. Hempton also effectively illustrates that Methodism became an internal theater for larger strife in part because its geographical and cultural diversity entailed "transmitting wider social tensions into internal disputes about governance and policy." See Hempton, *Methodism*, 8. The debate over slavery certainly became part of this process.

not remain entirely in the domain of arcane religious dogma; Scott and Whittemore each applied their religious beliefs to the real world and argued that their respective denominations were better suited to promote reform and cultivate morality in society.

Hatch and Haselby's interpretive model is especially illustrative for understanding this debate. Both Methodism and Universalism receive attention in Hatch's monograph. They were ascending denominations that embodied the emerging democratic, populist spirit of the age but understood what that meant in radically different ways. The Scott-Whittemore debate is a microcosm of what they shared and, more importantly, what they did not. Underscoring both their rapid growths, it is worth noting that neither Methodism nor Universalism existed a century before the debate began in 1826. Yet the Scott-Whittemore debate offers nuance into some of the overarching themes in Hatch and Haselby's works. Both men were what Hatch described as "communication entrepreneurs," with Whittemore already pursuing a path as a newspaper editor and Scott just in the infancy of realizing the power of the press.[16] Where Scott adopted an everyman populist religious evangelism that lacked sophistication, he combined this temperament with a relatively orthodox Christian theology that emphasized the harmony between Old and New Testament and the way Jesus Christ was necessary for salvation. By contrast, Whittemore conducted himself in a manner better aligned with Hatch's "classically educated and university-trained clergymen" and Haselby's "Northeastern elite" even if his theology remained extraordinarily radical. As Scott pressured Whittemore's theology and its practicality, Whittemore increasingly turned towards a more polemic excoriation of the clergy and adopted a populist rhetoric that aligns him with Hatch and Haselby's popular religion.[17] In

[16] Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 127.
[17] Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 162. The establishment that Hatch initially focuses on is what he terms the "Reformed orthodoxy" as espoused by the Calvinist Establishment. In this earlier struggle, Methodists

many respects, Scott found himself debating the cornerstones of modernist Christianity and its different manifestations: a liberal construction of the Bible, a rejection of the overarching salvation narrative, and what I consider to be a forerunner to prosperity theology. The Scott and Whittemore debate, then, was the byproduct of a Hatchian confrontation between insurgent preaching with conservative theology and insurgent theology with conservative preaching.

Chapter 4 returns to Orange Scott's life, tracing his activities from the years 1825 through 1835. Scott's marriage to his first wife, Amey Fletcher, is the connective thread that runs through this chapter. In the years after Scott's debate with Whittemore, he began a meteoric rise through the Methodist Episcopal Church hierarchy. His two years in Charlestown were followed by a return to the New England periphery, where Scott proved himself to be a capable revivalist. This culminated with a revival campaign in Springfield, Massachusetts that resulted in Scott's elevation to the rank of presiding elder – one of five in the New England Conference – by the time he was thirty years old. Amey Fletcher Scott, far from being a passive figure in this story, actively supported her husband's ministerial labors; she joined him at camp meetings and religious conferences when health and family would allow, hosted prayer meetings, and even counseled ministers under Scott's charge. During these years, however, Orange Scott truly came into his own as a minister: he refined his preaching style and presented a captivating message which balanced evangelical Christianity on an axis of Edwardsian despair and Finneyite hope.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 explore the second great debate that characterized Scott's life: his debate with anti-abolition and proslavery Methodists. This debate took many forms over the years but would be a confrontation that defined and shaped his life from 1833 until his death in 1847. While the personalities changed, many of the underlying questions did not. This debate,

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and Universalists were allies working at cross-purposes: they did not agree about salvation but shared an opposition to Calvinist teachings. See Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 170-173.

however, hinged upon several crucial, existential questions that got at the heart of what it meant to be a Methodist and a Christian in a secular, republican society. In doing so, these debates exposed stark, perhaps irreconcilable, differences between Scott and his opponents. These chapters examine themes explored in Larry Tise's *Proslavery: A History and Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* and build on the intellectual framework championed by Ben Wright in *Bonds of Salvation*. Tise presents a portrait of proslavery ideology – understood as both support for slavery and anti-abolitionism – and depicts it as fundamentally conservative and authentically American. These "social conservatives," Tise argues, wielded proslavery ideology as "a weapon for fending off all forms of social radicalism."[18] Tise's ambitious argument becomes especially compelling when he incorporates the role that northern and, in particular, the New England clergy played in constructing a proslavery consensus that made its way southward. At its core, this proslavery ideology hinged upon an elitist support for social authority and hierarchy. Scott's many opponents during these years, Wilbur Fisk and Daniel Whedon of Wesleyan University, Nathan Bangs of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Bishop Elijah Hedding, Southern Methodist William A. Smith, and Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow, all conformed in one way or another to Tise's framework.[19]

The struggle within the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery, however, complicates this narrative. Building on Donald G. Mathews, I instead argue that a simple radical and conservative paradigm does not accurately reflect the complicated dynamics in Methodist proslavery and antislavery.[20] Anti-abolition Methodists and proslavery Methodists were allies of

[18] Larry Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 10-14.
[19] Tise, *Proslavery*, 190-260. Tise analyzes some of Hubbard Winslow's "pro-slavery republicanism" as an example of what he describes as "the nation's conservative counterrevolution." See Tise, *Proslavery*, 348-362.
[20] Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism*, 192-193. Mathews argues there were three factions: southerners, abolitionists and anti-abolition northern conservatives.

convenience who may have been united by support for hierarchy and a common enemy, but that was where their similarities largely ended. Moreover, Tise's amalgamation of proslavery and anti-abolitionism avoids an essential complexity within antebellum Methodism. As these chapters will show, Methodism was divided among abolition, anti-abolition, and proslavery factions which were even further subdivided among themselves. Part of Scott's great contribution to the sundering of the Methodist Episcopal Church rested on his ability, knowingly or unknowingly, to drive a wedge between anti-abolition and proslavery Methodists. Moreover, Scott's evangelical abolitionism stressed a fundamental conservatism of its own when juxtaposed with what he considered to be "do-nothing" conservatism. Scott's radical, intractable brand of conservatism, his aggressive calls to repent and turn back to the idyllic past to restore its principles, obscures what was still a fundamentally conservative message.

These chapters also build on Wright's *Bonds of Salvation*, especially his conversionist and purificationist paradigm. This debate pitted supporters of a "conversionist consensus" around evangelization against advocates of purifying the church of its shortcomings. Wright ably argues that this debate and the breakdown of the consensus around conversion created the tensions that culminated with divisions inside Methodism, Baptism, and Presbyterianism and foreshadowed the coming Civil War. Scott's life fits this narrative, and Wright gives attention to his crucial role in facilitating the sundering of American Methodism.[21] In many respects, Scott demonstrates the fluidity between conversionism and purificationism. Convinced he was called to the ministry to preach the Gospel and convert sinners, Scott's own humanitarian sensibilities and commitment to moral purity ultimately forced him to embrace abolitionism as a moral imperative. In doing so, however, Scott wedded his conversionist vocation and his purificationist abolitionism into a

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[21] Ben Wright, *Bonds of Salvation: How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2020), 9-21. For Orange Scott, see Wright, *Bonds of Salvation*, 185-189.

singular coherent whole that he harmonized by an uncompromising commitment to Wesleyan Methodism as he understood it.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine Scott's conversion to abolitionism and his foray into the Methodist newspaper the *Zion's Herald* as the chosen representative of abolition Methodists. In the first half of 1835, he clashed with Daniel Whedon and Wilbur Fisk and their brand of "Middletown Methodism" that stressed the conversionist consensus, lamented the consequences of antislavery agitation, and articulated an elitist, respectable brand of Methodism fundamentally at odds with Scott's populist antislavery Methodism. During this debate, Scott began to formulate and crystallize his radical and conservative synthesis through what I term the Wheel of Reform. Scott presented a world of stark moral absolutes and timeless principles that could be gradually realized in society. To Scott, a nation was composed of a variety of institutions broadly construed as church, people, and government. Reform began with intractable moral preaching from ministers who inspired the people to change their ways and culminated with the people pressuring legislators and government officials to enact reform. This process made Scott a consistent believer in the power of moral suasion *and* political power. This vision for social reform, however, challenged the established Methodist anti-abolition consensus and revealed his stark differences with the church's hierarchy. Slavery, then, represented another connected but significant disagreement between Scott and anti-abolition Methodism: the place of the church in a republican society. To anti-abolition Methodists like Fisk and Whedon, the church needed to avoid any engagement in political matters. To Scott, however, ministers had an absolute obligation to engage in moral issues even if they had political components.

Chapter 6 concludes with the New England annual conference at Lynn, Massachusetts in the summer of 1835. This conference, a resounding triumph for the abolition Methodists, set the

stage for Chapter 7, which explores Scott's antislavery activities after the annual conference. The chapter culminates with the general conference at Cincinnati in May 1836. During this time, Scott increasingly became an active participant in the larger national antislavery movement. The Cincinnati Conference, however, proved to be a watershed moment for Scott and the Methodist Episcopal Church. Anti-abolition and proslavery Methodists forged an uneasy partnership to overwhelmingly defeat abolition Methodism. Scott, however, emerged from this seemingly demoralizing loss more defiant and more popular than ever. He quickly became the face of abolition Methodism and, in the years afterwards, began to play an even greater role in the antislavery movement. In his defeat, however, Scott won an important but overlooked victory over both proslavery and anti-abolition Methodism. During his speeches on the floor, Scott rebutted excoriations of abolitionism by returning to the real issue at hand: the sinfulness of slavery. In doing so, he changed the subject from the issue that united northern moderates and proslavery southerners – anti-abolitionism – and framed the debate around the issue that they did not share: an unqualified endorsement of the peculiar institution. This line of demarcation, coupled with an increasingly aggressive proslavery contingent in the southern church, only widened in the coming years until northern moderates could no longer sustain the consensus.

Chapter 8 turns to the aftermath of the Cincinnati Conference and traces Scott's antislavery activities as a Methodist minister and an antislavery agent from 1836 through 1838. The chapter opens with Orange Scott's demotion from the rank of presiding elder – potentially as punishment for his abolitionism – and his reassignment to Lowell, Massachusetts. Witnessing firsthand the ways ecclesiastical power could be used to stifle debate and agitation on slavery, Scott increasingly began to turn his rhetorical fire on Methodist church government. This chapter culminates with the murder of Elijah Lovejoy and a short-lived debate between Scott and Dr.

A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow over his death. That debate ultimately rested on the very conception of "republican liberty" and the role of Christian churches in a free society. Where Winslow and Snow adopted an authoritarian, majoritarian understanding of speech, Scott instead supported an absolute individual right to freedom of speech and saw government protections of it as integral to his Wheel of Reform.

While Chapter 9 begins with Orange Scott's continued antislavery activities inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church, this chapter and chapter 10 focus on the third debate that characterized his life: his debate with friend and ally William Lloyd Garrison over non-resistance, voting, and women's rights. The debate between the two men was ultimately subsumed into the larger antislavery civil war that culminated with the fragmentation of the movement in 1840. These chapters examine Scott's contributions to that period of discord from 1838-1840 and principally challenge Donald G. Mathews's framing of the debate as one that could be attributed to Scott's "single-mindedness." Scott, Mathews contends, was temperamentally unable to focus on more than "one 'cause' at a time."[22] While Mathews correctly underscores voting as a substantial area of disagreement, his framing unfortunately obscures fundamental differences between Scott and Garrison in 1838. Voting, I argue, was but a single and specific manifestation of this larger dispute. Non-resistance, the complete repudiation of all civil and ecclesiastical government, should be understood as the central point of contention. Rather than being the consequence of Scott's inability to embrace more than one reform issue at a time, a focused study of the Scott-Garrison rift reveals the ways an evangelical abolitionist like Scott could see non-resistance as an anathema to everything he held dear.

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[22] Mathews, *Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary*, 77.

This debate also reveals a fascinating dynamic in the antislavery civil war. In her thesis on Scott, Heather Mills argues that Garrison "seemed to lose the central focus of abolitionism" by embracing "other political and social views."[23] Chapters 9 and 10 reinforce this claim but expand on it in one significant way. Either rhetorically or genuinely, Scott came to position himself, and not Garrison, as the truer and more complete embodiment of Garrisonianism as it existed at the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society. This fascinating undercurrent to Scott's broadsides against Garrison, Henry C. Wright, and the non-resistance abolitionists reinforces his conservative commitment to the past and his continued critiques of those he believed had departed from first principles in favor of novel abstract theories.

The final two chapters discuss the Wesleyan Methodist secession. These chapters begin with the Baltimore General Conference in 1840 and the decisive victories for anti-abolition and proslavery Methodists. This general conference demoralized abolition Methodists, including Orange Scott, and eventually paved the way for his withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842. I briefly examine the contours of Scott's quasi-retirement in Newbury, Vermont, and his reemergence from exile as a Wesleyan Methodist. I then turn to the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection and its early years, but primarily chronicle this story from the eyes of Orange Scott: first through his editorship of the *True Wesleyan*, the church's unofficial newspaper, and then as the agent for the fledgling Wesleyan Methodist Book Concern. By examining the coverage of the *True Wesleyan* on slavery, abolition, and race and the Book Concern's embrace of antislavery literature, I argue that even as Scott endeavored to build a new denomination, he never abandoned his antislavery convictions.

[23] Mills, "Orange Scott: A True Believers Crusade against Slavery," 38-41.

While Mathews portrays this process of secession as "an admission of failure" and example in which Scott "gave up the fight," I present the Wesleyan Methodist Connection very differently.[24] Given that much of Scott's prior abolition Methodism rested upon *conserving* the original Methodist principles of John Wesley and Francis Asbury, I instead argue that withdrawal was a logical response to repeated failures. Scott's conservatism, while it did not seek or rejoice in the obliteration of institutions, placed a much greater value on the principles that institutions represented rather than the institutions themselves. Coming to the realization that the institution he was trying to conserve was dead, only one option lay before him: the restoration of principles by remaking the original institution. The Wesleyan Methodist Connection, then, was the product of a frustrated but defiant conservative who saw no other option than to turn from conservation to restoration.

During his final years in the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, Scott engaged in one final debate that served as a continuation of his clash with Garrison. This final controversy culminated with an explicit defense of conservatism. This chapter reveals that Scott found himself increasingly at odds with more zealous Wesleyans who hoped to see the church move in a more Garrisonian direction. This short-lived debate also illustrates the limitations of Scott's purificationism and underscores a defining characteristic of his life: religious conversion and renewal necessarily preceded moral purification and social betterment. Where many Garrisonian Wesleyans saw their church as a social movement with a religion, Scott believed the opposite to be true.

At this juncture, it is important to briefly comment on an important historical context for Scott's eventual secession. Scott was not the first Methodist to secede due to frustrations over the

[24] Mathews, *Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary*, 95-96.

racism of white Methodists or the perceived abuses of ecclesiastical authority. His movement built on two great dissenting Methodist traditions that had come before him: an antiracist Methodism symbolized by Richard Allen and an anti-episcopal Methodism embodied most successfully by the Methodist Protestant Church. Where Allen built a Methodist Church so that Black Methodists could worship free from the predations of white racism and the Protestants created a church without episcopal tyranny, Scott endeavored to build a biracial church anchored by moderation in church government. This is not, however, to say that Scott and Allen were identical; in fact, there is no evidence that Scott even spoke of Allen. Nevertheless, while race did not consume Scott's thinking, racial egalitarianism was one of his most consistent and defining characteristics. There are some striking parallels between the two men, but they ultimately occupy different places in the history of Methodism. Allen, as Richard S. Newman has ably demonstrated, was a Black founder and a man of the Eighteenth Century who represented the early reform zeal of a young Methodism; Scott, by contrast, represented a populist reaction against the turn towards respectability in elite Methodism and, unlike Allen, was eminently a man of the Nineteenth Century with an almost Victorian optimism in gradual moral improvement.[25] Orange Scott, however, would not have become the man he became or led the movement he did without the trailblazing contributions of a Richard Allen.

Orange Scott's death in 1847 meant that he did not live to see the great events that precipitated the larger fracturing of the Union: the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the birth of the Republican Party, the Dred Scot decision, John Brown's revolution, or the election of Abraham Lincoln. Nevertheless, Scott helped create a culture in which these events could take place. At first seeking to conserve the antislavery legacy of his church, he eventually

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[25] Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 4-24.

set out to restore it. His crusade against slavery in the largest evangelical denomination in America placed considerable strain upon the cords of union in church and state. By bringing a dose of Garrisonianism into Methodism, Scott created a unique worldview that reconciled the competing radical and conservative impulses in the Wesleyan and antislavery imagination. By defining slavery as a sin that should be immediately abandoned, popularizing that message within Methodism, and fusing emancipation with equalization, Scott presented a vision of Methodism that shook the denomination's establishment to its very foundations. Yet this, in his mind, was not some radical move into innovative change. Instead, he simply wished, as he observed in his "House Divided" article, "to speak ... as American Methodists once did."[26] If labeling slavery a sin had set the Union on the path to Civil War, then Orange Scott's ability to abolitionize American Methodism marked an important step in snapping the cords of anti-abolition union.

[26] O. Scott, "'A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand.," *Zion's Watchman*, March 2, 1839, vol. 4, no. 9, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 10, 2022).

Chapter 1: The Life and Times of Rev. Orange Scott, 1800-1826

Orange Scott was born in Brookfield, Vermont, a small town in Orange County with just under 1,000 residents, on February 13, 1800. Orange County, which numbered 18,238 people scattered across 20 towns at the time of Scott's birth, was directly southwest of the centrally located Washington County and shared a border with New Hampshire.[1] If Vermont served as a geographical bridge of sorts between the New England states on one hand, and the mid-Atlantic state of New York on the other, then Orange County was decidedly looking in an eastward direction. Scott, who would spend almost his entire life in New England, came to embrace and embody the Puritanical legacy of that region.

Scott's parents reflected that New England influence. His father, Samuel Scott, was a transplant from Willington, Connecticut, while his mother, Lucy Whitney, was from Halifax, Vermont in Windham County, in the southeastern corner of the state bordering both New Hampshire and Massachusetts.[2] Lucy Whitney was likely the daughter of Ebner Whitney, the head of house in Halifax's lone Whitney family.[3] Samuel Scott, conversely, was born in either 1766 or 1767 to John and Mary Scott.[4] Shortly after their marriage, Scott and Whitney moved to

[1] "Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States, According to 'An act providing for the second Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States.' Passed February twenty eighth, one thousand eight hundred." *Vermont History*, p. 21-22. https://vermonthistory.org/client_media/files/Learn/Census%20Records/1800-Census.pdf (Accessed July 12, 2021).

[2] Although Orange Scott identifies his mother as being from Halifax, Vermont, U.S. Census data suggests that she may have been born in Massachusetts prior to moving to Vermont. In the 1860 U.S. Census, Lucy Whitney, then an 83-year-old woman, was living with Samuel Scott, one of her sons, and his family. Although the family all listed their birthplaces as Vermont, Lucy instead wrote what appears to be "Mass." See U.S. Census 1860, Elmore, Lamoille, Vermont, Page 752, accessed through *Ancestry History*.

[3] 1790 U.S. Census, accessed through Ancestry Library. Ebner Whitney's household included 3 males under the age of sixteen and one female, meaning that he was likely a widower. If Samuel Scott still resided in Willington, Connecticut, the likely candidate would be Jn/Jno Scott, the head of a six-person household in Tolland with 3 males over 16 and 1 male under 16.

[4] *Connecticut, U.S., Town Birth Records, pre-1870 (Barbour Collection)* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. Ancestry.com. *Vermont, U.S., Vital Records, 1720-1908* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013. Original data: State of Vermont. Vermont Vital Records

Brookfield, where she gave birth to Orange Scott, the first of what would become seven children. Little, however, is known of either Samuel Scott or Lucy Whitney before their marriage, and Orange Scott offered few details of them except for those relayed in his autobiography. “My father was poor, exceedingly poor,” he recounted of Samuel Scott.[5] This reality shaped Orange Scott’s early years, as his father, who was not a freeholder, had to rely on his own labor and that of his sons to provide for the family. According to Orange Scott’s friend, protégé, and first biography, Lucius Matlack, Samuel Scott worked by “cutting wood” in the Vermont wilderness.[6]

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Brookfield was a small town. The Orange County paper, Sereno Wright’s *Weekly Wanderer*, spent relatively little time covering its affairs and, when it did, it was often in relation to those of other towns such as Barre, Vermont. The *Weekly Wanderer* was based in Randolph, Vermont, a town nearly twice Brookfield’s size in 1800, and located eleven miles away on the opposite end of the county from Brookfield. While the distance might explain the absence of extensive coverage, it also suggests Brookfield at the turn of the century remained a relative backwater, a small town overshadowed by nearby Montpellier, seventeen miles distant, and other more significant towns in the center of the state.

Brookfield, with its proximity to the capital, had been the headquarters for Abel Lyman in 1798 as part of an effort to enforce a land tax enacted by the Vermont legislature in 1796 on

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through 1870. New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. State of Vermont. Vermont Vital Records, 1871–1908. New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. Original data: White, Lorraine Cook, ed. The Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records. Vol. 1-55. Baltimore, MD, USA: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1994-2002. The Connecticut records lists Samuel Scott’s birth as 1767 while the Vermont records say that he was born in 1766. The Vermont Vital Records correctly list his wife as Lucy and record list his death as May 25, 1825, which aligns with Orange Scott’s own statements about his father’s passing.

[5] Orange Scott and Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott: Compiled from His Personal Narrative, Correspondence, and Other Authentic Sources of Information,* ed. Lucius C. Matlack (New York: C. Prindle & L.C. Matlack, 1847), 5.

[6] Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott, Compiled from His Correspondence and Other Authentic Sources. In Two Parts*. Part II (New York: Published by C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Reform No. 5 Spruce Street, 1848), 56-57.

the Orange County town of Roxbury, Vermont. This tax, designed to pay for the construction of roads and bridges, charged landowners a half penny per acre of land and threatened that their land would be "sold at public venue ... to the highest bidder" if they refused.[7] This tax situation reemerged a few years later when Brookfield itself, along with the towns of Barre and Williamstown, were taxed by the General Assembly to pay for "the Branch Road" that linked Montpellier with the smaller towns in the central portion of the state. Given that this was "a Tax on all the Lands," it is unclear if the costs of this tax still made its way to laborers like Samuel Scott, even if they did not actually own any land in their own right.[8]

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[7] "Untitled." Abel Lyman, *The Vermont Gazette*, February 27, 1798, vol. 1, no. 30, p. 6, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[8] Joseph Dwight and Nathaniel Killam, "Barre, Williamstown, & Brookfield," *Weekly Wanderer*, September 11, 1802, vol. 2, no. 90, p. 4, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).

Figure 1. Vermont in 1796, four years before Orange Scott was born. Taken from Mathew Carey, *Carey's Pocket Atlas: Containing the Following Maps, Viz. With a Concise Description of Each State* (Philadelphia, PA: Printed for Mathew Carey by Lang and Ustick, 1796), Gale Primary Sources, Sabin Americana.

In 1799, the year before Orange Scott's birth, Brookfield was a township in flux. Moses Hubbard, the Justice of the Peace, issued a statement to both the *Vermont Journal* and the *Rutland Weekly Herald* to announce that the proprietors and landowners of Brookfield and the landowners planned to meet on June 5 to choose a moderator, to select a town clerk, and to determine whether or not the proprietors would divide their lands into severalty. Major Reuben Adams, the "inholder" of Brookfield, was the host of this meeting.[9]

However, it was also a place with the many more ordinary and mundane things that were integral to a small town. The revolution in consumer goods that had helped transform the British colonies and early United States had managed to make its way to Brookfield by 1802, with exports directly from Boston that were distributed at Barna Biglow's store. Residents of Brookfield could purchase "English and India goods" that ranged from seasonally appropriate clothing for men and women to beverages and spices. These included more standard products to the more exotic goods like "Camel Hair Shawls," "West-India Rum," "Morocco Shoes," and even "India Cottons."[10]

When David M'Allafir established his clothier business in Brookfield in 1801, he did so with an emphasis on serving "employers" who were interested in having him create "workmanlike" clothing for them.[11] By that point, Brookfield was better connected to the rest of the state and region so that M'Allafir could accommodate various colored clothes that his customers requested. Given the emphasis on clothes for workers, one can certainly infer that Samuel Scott's status as a poor tenant farmer was not an usual livelihood in Brookfield in the

[9] See Moses Hubbard, "Brookfield," *The Vermont Journal*, April 2, 1799, vol. 16, no. 39, p. 4, and Moses Hubbard, "Brookfield," *Rutland Weekly Herald*, February 25, 1799, vol. 5, no. 8, p. 3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).

[10] "Fresh Goods," *Weekly Wanderer*, November 13, 1802, vol. 2, no. 99, p. 4, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).

[11] "David M'Allafir," *The Vermont Journal*, November 3, 1801, vol. 19, no. 17, p. 4, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).

early 1800s. For example, Elijah Paine sought to hire "active industrious men" for summer labor on his property off the turnpike that ran through Brookfield.[12] Whether or not Samuel Scott took Paine's offer or had his workman clothes fashioned by M'Allafir, the fact of the matter was that Brookfield, just like the rest of Orange County, was an area populated by free laborers. Vermont had been the first state to abolish slavery in 1777, and a young Orange Scott grew up in a world in which people received compensation for the fruits of their labor, and they enjoyed the freedom to move in search for better opportunities.[13]

The latter of these became a fixture in the early years of Orange Scott. His early life was one of constant motion. Samuel Scott kept his family on the move, never staying in one place for more than a few years. "They were moving planets," Scott said of his parents, adding that their life "verif[ied] the proverb that 'a rolling stone gathers not moss.'"[14] Samuel Scott's chosen profession as a hired woodcutter perhaps explains this decision. Vermont was only just beginning to realize its largely untapped resource potential in iron, wool cultivation, ash, and even sugar. As Samuel Williams, a foreigner traveler, noted in the 1790s, all these professions required clearing the land of its "immense quantity of wood." This afforded laborers like Samuel Scott a steady stream of available labor. However, as Williams also observed, that labor was inherently unstable since towns, farms, roads, and pastures needed to be cleared only once. As regions of Vermont increasingly came to be developed and settled, then, Samuel Scott found himself forced to move in search of work.[15]

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[12] Elijah Paine, "Employment for Labourers," *The Vermont Journal*, March, 16, 1801, vol. 18, no. 39, p. 4, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[13] The U.S. Census further reinforces that slavery had ceased to exist in the state in practice as well as law, as it does not record a single slave living in Vermont in either 1790 or 1800.
[14] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 5.
[15] Samuel Williams, *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont* (Walpole, Hampshire: By Isaiah Thomas and David Carlisle, Jun, 1794), Gale, Sabin Americana, 311-323. Williams noted that labor was abundant: anyone who wanted to work could find it. Although he did not estimate the yearly wages of a woodcutter, he estimated that a wheat

After briefly residing in Brookfield, the Scott's made their way to Berlin, Vermont sometime between 1801 and 1802 for the birth of Scott's first brother, Ephraim.[16] Between 1802 and 1805, the Scotts welcomed a third son, Samuel.[17] From there, they left the United States entirely and, as Scott later put it, "strayed" into Canada.[18] In Canada, Lucy Scott gave birth to their first daughter, Lovinia, in 1807.[19] The family remained in Canada from 1806 to 1812, marking the longest period in Scott's life up to that point where he had remained in one place. In Canada, Scott briefly received his first formal education and spent about four months in the summer of 1806 in a district school in Stanstead. He received only two more months of

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farmer could make seventy dollars a year for 120 bushels of wheat. Williams, however, strongly endorsed the model of traveling woodcutter transitioning into settled farmer and therefore wanted to promote farming as a livelihood.

[16] The move from Brookfield to Berlin likely took place in 1801 or 1802 because the death certificate for Ephraim Scott, Orange Scott's younger brother, listed him as being born in Berlin, Vermont. To further reinforce that this was the correct Ephraim Scott, his father is listed as "Samuel J. Scott" of Willington and his mother is listed as Lucy of Hallafax, VT. Ephraim Scott died on October 5, 1882 at 81 years of age. Given that he was listed as being exactly 81 years old, it is possible that his age was rounded up or down. If he was indeed exactly 81 years old at the time of his death, then the move to Berlin took place in October 1801. See, New England Historic Genealogical Society; Boston, Massachusetts; *Massachusetts Vital Records, 1840-1911*, accessed through Ancestry History.

[17] See U.S. Census data for 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880, accessed through Ancestry History. Samuel Scott was born between 1802 and 1805. On the 1850 Census, Samuel Scott of Lamoille, Vermont, was listed as being 47 years old. On the 1860 Census, that same Scott was listed as being 58 years old. The 1870 Census, by contrast, has him listed as 65 years old. Finally, the 1880 Census lists his age as 75. As a result, these census accounts suggest his birth year to be 1803, 1802, 1805, and 1805 respectively. Of greater interest is that the census data strongly suggests that this Samuel Scott is the son of Samuel and Lucy Scott, and the brother of Orange and Ephraim Scott. On each census, he is listed as a farmer. More significantly, however, the 1860 Census lists an 83-year-old "Lucy Scott" in his household, and the 1850 and 1870 Census data lists him having a son named "Orange."

[18] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6.

[19] There is some ambiguity about Lovinia (or Lavinia) Scott with available sources offering conflicting information, particularly with regards to her place of birth. The Vermont death certificate for her son Jonathan W. Daniels in 1912 lists her as "Lovinia Scott" with her birthplace as Alstead, New Hampshire. Her own Vermont death certificate, however, identifies her as a "male" who died on December 26, 1874 at the age of 67 years, 6 months, and 24 days, which would put her birth at June 2, 1807, when the Scott family had moved to Lower Canada according to Orange Scott's autobiography. This document, however, also lists Lavinia's father as "S. Scott" and her mother as "Lucy Whitney." However, the 1850 Census, the oldest available vital record about Lovinia, lists her as being a 42-year-old female married to Jeremiah Daniels at the time of the census, and being born in "Canada East." This document would therefore collaborate Orange Scott's autobiographical narrative without contradicting her death certificate. The death certificate of her son, Jonathan, documented over a century after her birth, was simply incorrect about her place of birth. See Vermont State Archives and Records Administration; Montpelier, Vermont, USA; User Box Number: PR-01920; Roll Number: S-30706; Archive Number: M-1985060, Vermont Death Records, 1909-2008 at Ancestry History for Jonathan Daniels; Vital Records and 1720-1908 Ancestry History for Lovinia Scott.

schooling over the next six years. The decline in educational opportunities for Scott after 1806 reflected his family's economic realities.

The Scotts were not alone in traveling across the American and Canadian borderlands in search of opportunity. In 1807, for example, the *North Star*, a nascent newspaper based in Danville, Vermont, published an advertisement from John Phillips of Stanstead, offering to sell 200 acres of land, including "extremely well-watered" farmland and a "beautiful young orchard." Aware that his readership was primarily American, Phillips emphasized its proximity with the U.S. border and claimed it was only "about seven miles from the Province line." He highlighted that it would be "an excellent stand for a tavern" due to its position at "a central place" linked by roads to neighboring towns. To further persuade the primarily American readers of the *North Star*, Phillips even went so far as to include all crops that were growing on the farm if the land was purchased immediately.[20] One could imagine a Samuel Scott, in search of land to clear or cultivate, reading or hearing of advertisements about Lower Canada and being enticed to uproot his family and move to Canada for opportunity.

This land sale, however, was not an isolated incident. Vermont newspapers from the *North Star* to the Windsor-based *Vermont Republican and American Journal* to the *Universalist Watchman* out of Montpellier, each covered or reported on the events in Stanstead specifically and Lower Canada generally. The *Vermont Republican*, promoting a *North Star* article, chronicled how a case of spotted fever had fared in Stanstead, Barnston, Compton, and Hatley in 1811. The *Universalist Watchman*, however, had a particular interest in Stanstead. Universalism,

[20] John Phillips, "Farm for Sale," *The North* Star, June 30, 1807, vol. 1, no. 25, p. 3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021). Given the politics of this point in time, particularly Anglo-American relations, and the U.S. Embargo of British goods, this transaction appearing in an American newspaper is interesting, as is the fact that the specific details of the purchase – namely, the price of goods – is absent. Furthermore, Phillips requested the buyer of his land come to Canada to finalize terms of sale.

an insurgent religious movement that taught that all people would enjoy salvation, had attempted to make inroads into Lower Canada during the Scotts residence there. Not only did the Universalists believe it necessary to mail the newspaper out of Stanstead to save "our Canada subscribers" the cost of U.S. postage, they also held a Universalist Conference in the town in September 1812.[21] One writer in the *Universalist Watchman* remarked that their cause in Canada had "far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the Fathers in our Israel" because "there has been a great revival of rational and spiritual religion in all this region." This account highlighted Stanstead as one of the three bastions of Universalist preaching in Canada. The writer further noted that the spread of Universalism into Canada ensured that the movement could "pervade every section of North America."[22] As a result, the fluidity of that borderlands region allowed for an ebb and a flow of laborers like Samuel Scott and religious ideas like Universalism during the opening decade of the nineteenth century.

An observer in the *Universalist Watchman*, "R.S.," while traveling through "the Townships of Lower Canada," noted that he found the people there to be "remarkably friendly, cordial, and hospitable; far more intelligent and refined than common report would lead us to suppose."[23] He also encountered many "ardent friends of Temperance" after lecturing on this "blessed cause" in Stanstead. Given that he spent two weeks in Stanstead, he offered a fuller portrait of that town:

> Stanstead is a township, ten miles square, and, for richness of soil, location, and general appearance, is not inferior to any town which occurs to my recollection. It is neither level nor mountainous, but beautifully undulating and gently uneven, presenting a rich and

[21] N. Star, "Spotted Fever," *Vermont Republican and American Journal*, March 25, 1811, vol. 3, no. 13, p. 3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021); "To Our Canada Subscribers," *The Universalist Watchman*, July 16, 1812, p. 2; "Conference," *Universalist Watchman*, September 3, 1812, p. 3.
[22] J. Ward, "Our Cause in Canada," *Universalist Watchman*, December 3, 1812, p. 3.
[23] R.S., "Hasty Thoughts on a Journey," *The Universalist Watchman*, October 8, 1812, p. 2.

grand appearance. The soil, generally, through that region of country, is good, and the people prosperous.[24]

This account offers a vivid portrait of why laborers like Samuel Scott made the decision to cross the border into Canada at a time of Anglo-American tensions. Setting the stage for why many of those same Americans would consider a return to the United States, R.S. observed that Vermont had, in the span of thirty years, gone from "a wilderness" and "desert" into "a faithful field" filled with "Beautiful farms," even when the state suffered from "sluggish weather."[25]

Although there is no direct evidence that a young Orange Scott interacted with the Universalist movement, their presence in Stanstead is noteworthy for two major reasons. First, their interest in the Temperance movement, as discussed by R.S., serves as a link which connected Scott's youth in Canada to his later activities as a minister. The cause of temperance was second only to his support for the abolition of slavery, leaving one to wonder if the strong pro-temperance sentiment in Stanstead that R.S. observed had made an impression on him when he was a boy. Secondly, Scott became a staunch critic of Universalism and its theological teachings after entering the Methodist ministry. (This theme will be explored in the following two chapters.) The Universalist teaching that Scott likely encountered in Canada, then, did not have an influence on him or his thought. As he later remarked, he never had a desire to ever become a Universalist due to his belief in the existence of hell.[26]

After six years in Canada, the Scott family returned to America during the first half of 1812 and settled for about a year in Calais, Vermont, a small township in Caledonia County that numbered just 841 people in 1810.[27] Shortly after arriving in the United States, just under two

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[24] R.S., "Hasty Thoughts on a Journey," *The Universalist Watchman*, October 8, 1812, p. 2.
[25] R.S., "Hasty Thoughts on a Journey," *The Universalist Watchman*, October 8, 1812, p. 2.
[26] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 7.
[27] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6. See 1810 U.S. Census, accessed through Ancestry History.

weeks after the War of 1812 began, the Scotts welcomed a second daughter, Diancie, to their growing family.[28] In his autobiography, Scott described the next several years of his life in general terms, explaining that his return to Vermont largely closed the door on any opportunities to pursue an education since he had to work "summer and winter" to help support his family.[29] Although he learned to read and write by the time he was thirteen years old, he would only receive seven more months of formal schooling in his youth.[30]

Despite the absence of formal education in his early life, Scott found opportunities to put his ability to read to use. In 1843, he recounted that he used to read the *North Star*, published in the neighboring town of Danville, Vermont, "more than thirty years ago!"[31] That date, before 1813, suggested that the Scott family either had the means to subscribe to their own newspaper or knew a family that did. It also suggests that they began reading it while in Canada or shortly after their return to Vermont.[32] Exposure to the *North Star* at an early age likely had a significant influence on the young Orange Scott.

[28] Samuel and Lucy Scott's second daughter is difficult to track due to conflicting information in the available records. Diancie (Scott) Garfield's death certificate in the Vermont Vital Records lists her father and mother as "Samuel Scott" and "Lucy Whitney" respectively, establishing her death as being on October 19, 1877 at 65 years, 3 months, and 19 days, which would have meant she was born on June 30, 1812. Her birthplace is also listed as being Calais, confirming Orange Scott's claim that his family resided there from 1812-1813. See Vermont Vital Records, 1720-1908, Ancestry History. However, the 1850 Census lists "Hosea Garfield" as living with a 37-year-old male named "Derney." The 1860 Census seemed to correct the mistake in her sex, listing her as a 48-year-old female, but giving her the name "Dianey." Her tombstone in Sheffield, Vermont, lists her name as "Diency" and describes her as the "wife of Hosei Garfield," see https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/21806331/diency-garfield . The name "Diancey Scott" of Calais, Vermont, also appears on the death records as the mother of a deceased Candance Garfield Davis. The 1860 Census suggests this female was in fact named Candace, a 6-year-old at the time, aligning with the 1854 birth date on the death record. According to her death certificate, she died on June 4, 1919. See Vermont State Archives and Records Administration; Montpelier, Vermont, USA; User Box Number: PR-01920; Roll Number: S-30707; Archive Number: M-1985061 and Vermont Death Records, 1909-2008, accessed through Ancestry History. Furthermore, her May 6, 1839 marriage record to "Hosea Garfield" lists her name as "Diancy Scott," see Vermont Vital Records, 1720-1908, accessed through Ancestry History.
[29] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6.
[30] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6-7.
[31] "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, January 6, 1844, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 3-4, https://secure.wesleyan.org/342/the-true-wesleyan (accessed February 10, 2021).
[32] The *North Star* did not commence publication until 1807, so the likely candidates for where Scott first encountered the newspaper would have to be either Stanstead, Lower Canada or Calais, Vermont.

Owned and edited by Ebenezer Eaton, the *North Star* was one of the major newspapers published out of central Vermont. When a young Orange Scott opened the newspaper to read it, he saw the paper masthead emblazoned with the quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin, "Where liberty dwells, that is my country."[33] The paper offered a decidedly Republican perspective on the events of its day, eschewing the Federalists before and during the War of 1812 and excoriating their majority on the Supreme Court in the midst of the Era of Good Feelings.[34] The Republicans were a political party led by Thomas Jefferson that championed small farmers, opposed national banks, promoted a strict construction of the U.S. Constitution, and held a foreign policy sympathetic to France and antagonistic to Great Britain. They opposed the predominantly New England-centric Federalists and, during the Era of Good Feelings under President James Monroe, came to dominate the affairs of the country. Politically, Vermont was an outlier among the New England states. Although it supported Federalist John Adams in 1796 and 1800, it backed the Republican presidential candidates for president in every election through 1820. And in 1812, it was the only state north of Pennsylvania to vote Republican.

However, it is important to note that the *North Star's* brand of Republicanism, like the one Munroe later championed during the Era of Good Feelings, was nationalistic. For example, on the eve of the War of 1812, the newspaper took aim at what they considered to be "a plot" by the Essex Junto and other Federalist societies and committees that they believed sought to promote a "Separation of the Union" at the behest of British agents.[35] Before and during the War of 1812, many New England Federalists, frustrated with the economic devastation of trade wars

[33] See *The North Star* (Danville), April 4, 1812, vol 6, no. 10, p. 1, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[34] On June 10, 1819, the *North Star* republished a lengthy *Niles Register* article criticizing the *McCulloch v Maryland* decision by the Marshall Court, arguing that it was "a truly alarming" decision because it gave the government "the right and power to grant monopolies." See "Sovereignty of the States, No. 3," *The North Star*, June 10, 1819, vol. 13, no. 10, p. 1, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[35] "The Plot," *The North Star* (Danville), April 4, 1812, vol. 6, no. 10, p. 3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).

and, eventually, open war with Great Britain, became increasingly antagonistic with the rest of the prowar Union. This discontent culminated at the Hartford Convention during the war, a meeting which flirted with a potential secession, and became a rallying cry among Republicans that Federalists were disloyal to the Union. The Federalist Party never recovered and ceased to exist after 1816.

Likening these Federalists at once to Absalom, Judas, and Benedict Arnold, the paper did not restrain itself in condemning those it identified as the leaders of the pro-British faction, whether it be Francis James Jackson, Timothy Pickering, or Josiah Dunham. These allegations of treason against political rivals were hardly unique from an early nineteenth-century newspaper. The newspaper still qualified these allegations, however, claiming the plots to be the work of "leading federalists" that "cannot with justice be attributed to all the members …." The *North Star* further argued that "pride of party" and "deep-rooted prejudice" drove these British-backed plotters to bring about "a disunion of this fair Republic."[36] The paper carried this perspective through the War of 1812, backing the war and publishing and republishing news articles from across the United States about the progress of the war against "the robbers of Denmark and the desolators of India."[37] This news always supported the war effort and, in one instance, even provided its readers with a complete list of all vessels the Americans had captured from the British.[38] In its own words or the words of those it chose to amplify, the paper continued to make no secret of its frustration with those Federalists who "thought it perfectly right for Great Britain to insult us."[39]

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[36] "The Plot," *The North Star* (Danville), April 4, 1812, vol. 6, no. 10, p. 3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[37] Publius, "From the Baltimore Whig, To the People of Maryland," *The North Star*, October 9, 1813, vol. 7, no. 37, p. 1, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[38] "From the National Advocate, THE WAR.," *North Star*, October 9, 1813, vol. 7, no. 37, p. 1, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).
[39] "The Gorgon head, struck off," *North Star*, April 9, 1814, vol 8, no. 11, p. 1, newspapers.com (accessed May 5, 2022). This article, republished from the *Richmond Enquirer* without comment, argued that the Federalists Party's

Orange Scott came to embody many of these sentiments. Although he admired many individuals and statesmen from Great Britain, most notably Methodist founder John Wesley and antislavery politician William Wilberforce, he, like the *North Star*, generally disliked British imperial ventures and its elitist aristocracy. In the *True Wesleyan*, a newspaper Scott owned and edited in his 40s, he published a brief update on the Opium War that could very well have been published by Eaton's *North Star*. Under the title "Effects of British Avarice," Scott's paper reported that the British had killed at least twenty thousand Chinese. In another instance, he reported the poverty in Britain before sarcastically quipping, "And this is the way human beings live in aristocratic Great Britain." During the British controversy over providing an allowance to Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, an indignant Scott informed readers that the British government paid him the equivalent of $150,000 s year "for his valuable services as husband to the Queen."[40] Scott did not just share the *North Star's* anti-British perspective; their unionism also influenced him. Although he was torn over the proslavery administration of the national government, he nevertheless held a lifelong loyalty to his understanding of the Union and to its founding principles.

Beyond coverage of American politics, the War of 1812 and its aftermath, and local affairs, the *North Star* also covered other noteworthy events. For example, Orange Scott and his family could have read about Meriwether Lewis' appointment to lead an expedition across the

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sympathy for Great Britain stemmed from their concerns about Napoleon. They therefore concluded that Britain was "our friend, our protector and our Bulwark." The article concluded that fear of Napoleon had led Federalists to put the interests of foreign peoples and nations ahead of the interests of American citizens. "They felt much more for other countries than their own," the article noted. This perspective not only echoes the *North Star's* hostile coverage of the Federalists during the War of 1812, but also alludes to its nationalistic perspective, encapsulated by the article's belief that the "plundered or impressed American" should be given greater priority over "the Italian, the Dutchman, the Spaniard."

[40] "Effects of British Avaracise.," *True Wesleyan*, January 21, 1843, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 4, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). "How They Live in Great Britain.," *True Wesleyan*, March 9, 1844, vol. 2, no. 10, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). "Untitled.," *True Wesleyan*, February 24, 1844, vol. 2, no. 8, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Louisiana Territory.[41] But above all he would have read about slavery and abolitionism, from Congress' discussions to abolish the slave trade in 1807 to the paper's coverage of the events in Haiti, the first Black Republic. When discussing Haiti, however, the newspaper took a firm position against "the tyrant Dessalines" and shared an account of the "Haytian campaign" against him in 1807.[42] In one instance, Eaton offered his readers "suggested" reading from a sermon entitled "Negro Slavery Unjustifiable."[43]

Even after the end of the slave trade, the *North Star* continued to discuss slavery and its immorality, reminding readers that the American Revolution had been rooted in a desire by the colonists to abolish the slave trade against the wishes of "the merchants of Bristol."[44] This view undoubtedly left an impression on a young Orange Scott. Although he cannot be said to have been a lifelong abolitionist, he claimed to have always harbored sentiments against the peculiar institution. Ignorance, he claimed, had delayed his "conversion" to abolitionism, but it was specifically the kind of ignorance displayed by a person who did not understand the extent or scope of a problem.[45] Before becoming an abolitionist, Scott had believed slavery to be a passing

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[41] "Summary – Domestic," *North Star*, March 31, 1807, vol. 1, no. 12, p. 3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021).

[42] "SLAVE TRADE," *North Star*, March 17, 1807, vol. 1, no. 10, p. 2, newspapers.com (accessed 7/8/2021). For examples of general congressional proceedings and similar news, see "Treasurer's Report," *North Star* (Danville), January 15, 1807, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 2, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021) as well as "Congressional Diary" and "Pleasing and Important," *North Star* (Danville), March 10, 1807, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 2-3, newspapers.com (accessed July 8, 2021). "Hayti," *North Star*, January 15, 1807, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 2, newspapers.com (accessed July 14, 2021).

[43] "Thoughts. Negro Slavery Unjustifiable," *North Star*, August 8, 1807, vol. 1, no. 31, p. 4, newspapers.com (accessed July 14, 2021). This sermon, published for the *North Star*, offered a relatively mainstream northern position on slavery, opening with an assertion that slavery was a peculiar, local issue but one that "will not be tolerated probably for any length of time in any state." The author then went on to note that slavery was incompatible with "The pure, peaceable, gentle principles of the gospel" and then promoted a confidence that slavery could not survive in a Christian culture. This sermon reflected the attitudes of many northerners on slavery. Orange Scott himself shared this same view about slavery until about 1834. As he noted, "I did not suppose that slavery existed in the M.E. Church, or among other Christians or ministers." Instead, he believed it was an institution that could not exist "in our free and happy country." See Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 31.

[44] Baltimore American, "Mr. Randolphs Letter, note," *North Star*, January 21, 1815, vol. 8, no. 52, p. 2, newspapers.com (accessed July 14, 2021). The invocation of the "Merchants of Bristol" is interesting, given that the merchants as a class were leaders in the effort to stop William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson's moral and political crusade against the slave trade in Great Britain.

[45] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 32.

problem had been resolved. The *North Star*'s coverage of the abolition of the international slave trade helped to promote the sanguine hopes of slavery's inevitable demise that were characteristic of free states in the early nineteenth century.

Scott generally spoke little of his childhood. His autobiography largely glossed over this chapter of his life, except in broad strokes. His early years, however, were defined by working in the fields, either on behalf of his father or as the hired hand of another person. By age eighteen, he had set out on his own and, by age twenty, resided in Barre, a town in the center of Vermont just northeast of his native Brookfield. During these years, Scott offered his labor in exchange for money, housing, and education. He engaged in what he later called "hard labor" during summers and falls to make a livelihood for himself.[46] Given that Lucius Matlack referred to Scott at this time as "that woodman of Vermont," it is likely he went into the same work as his father.[47] When he was eighteen, he lived in "one small sleeping apartment" that he shared with another laborer, owning only his "old shoes, and coats, and pants." He attended the district school in Barre during the winter months.[48] Scott, nevertheless, enjoyed some amenities, including "a full sized bed" and sporadic educational opportunities in grammar. In a move that perhaps foreshadowed his later activities as an evangelical activist, he purchased "a fine game cock" during this time, "not to fight, but to keep." His pet, Chanticleer, became a source of "restlessness and fun" even if the bird's "loud, and above all, long, very long" crows came at the expense of the fellow laborer with whom he shared quarters.[49]

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[46] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6-7.
[47] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 57.
[48] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6-7.
[49] "Amusing Incident," *The True Wesleyan*, November 4, 1843, vol. 1, no. 44, p. 4, Wesleyan Church, https://secure.wesleyan.org/342/the-true-wesleyan (accessed February 10, 2021).

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Scott's childhood was not his "indifferent English education" as the *Olive Branch* later termed it; it was the complete absence of organized religion in his life.[50] This was unusual but not unheard of in Vermont at the time. According to Samuel Williams, Vermont was a state characterized by religious diversity and religious liberty. The state had Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and "some" Quakers. Yet for Williams, the state's commitment to religious liberty and freedom of conscience, was one of its most noteworthy characteristics. This laudable commitment to "*equality*" over "*toleration*," however, when coupled with the general lack of education among Vermont's citizens, meant that some Vermonters adhered to what he termed "a religion of ignorance" that either led them to "infidelity or superstition." For a Doctor of Laws like Williams, however, the solution to this lack of religion was simple: "the increase of knowledge and education."[51]

Poverty, Scott explained, meant that he did not even have the proper clothes to "appear decently in the house of God." He neither attended attend religious services nor prayed during his youth. He described this period of his life, the early beginnings of his spiritual awakening, in generally nebulous terms. His ideas about religion amounted to little more than feelings or sentiments. They were "vague, indefinite, and confused," he recollected. He believed in some of the basic tenets of the Christian religion, namely the concept of sin and the need for repentance. He believed in heaven and hell and said these ideas, while unformed, were still relatively orthodox and traditionalist in nature. He thought that the wicked would be punished for their transgressions and said that he knew he too would be held accountable before God for his own

[50] "The Late Rev. Orange Scott," *Olive Branch*, September 18, 1847, vol. 12, no. 11, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society, EBSCOhost (accessed July 14, 2021).
[51] Williams, *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, 334-340.

lack of religion. “I had never the slightest temptation to be a Universalist,” he declared in his autobiography.[52]

This changed in the summer of 1820. While working alone in a field in Barre, the twenty-year-old Scott underwent a religious experience. He characterized this event more in intellectual rather than emotional terms. This did not stem from “human agency” as he phrased it, since he did not derive his religious convictions from a sermon, a minister, or any other “human instrumentality.”[53] He attributed the source of this directly to God. Scott was “awakened” through what he described as “the influence of God’s spirit” on him, forcing him to confront existential religious subjects that had previously been merely theoretical and ephemeral in nature. These subjects suddenly took on far greater meaning for him.

His mind contemplated four things that forced him to reconsider not only his religious beliefs, but the course his life would take. These interconnected subjects pertained to his very existence as a human, the existence of God, the idea of eternity, and the consequences of damnation. After several hours of reflection, Scott resolved to read the Bible and pray in mornings and evenings. At first, this was a private consideration for him, what he described as his “secret prayer.”[54] Over time, however, this personal belief soon became a very public matter for him and those in his life.

Scott’s initially dispassionate attitude towards religion, illustrated by his unwillingness to attend church for want of decent clothes as well as his hesitancy to join a religious organization for lack of knowledge, reflects a broader element of his personality that characterized much of his life. A self-educated and self-made man, he frequently displayed a reluctance to involve

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[52] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 6-7.
[53] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 7-8.
[54] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 8.

himself in things for which he felt unprepared or uneducated. He would often be slow to engage topics or events in his life, from the institution of slavery to the very nature of religion itself, out of a desire to develop an informed opinion on the matter. Scott may have often been hesitant to commit to institutions or causes, but when he did, he did so zealously.

Scott's spiritual experience, private conversion, and newfangled religious instruction changed not only his demeanor but the direction of his life. He soon felt a call to the ministry: "It was but a few weeks after my conversion before I felt it would be my duty to call sinners to repentance."[55] That sentiment encapsulated much of his life's work, both as a minister and later as an abolitionist. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, his lengthy crusade against slavery inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church served almost entirely as an extension of his religious work, since Scott came to view the spiritual and the political as inexorably bound together. Although not alone in linking the political and the moral through a religious framework, what made Scott unique was how he perceived that union and how he went about promoting that vision of society.

Following his awakening, Scott bookended his days with prayer and Bible reading. Within weeks he made a public profession of his previously private religious experience during a camp meeting at Barre. His responsibilities as a hired laborer meant he had only been able to attend the final two days of the meeting on Saturday and Sunday, days which he characterized by their "Large public prayer meetings."[56] He was completely unfamiliar with these large-scale revivals or how a person was supposed to act. "I didn't know any better than to do just as I was told," he later told Lucius Matlack, adding that "If they said to me, go forward for prayers, I

[55] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 9.
[56] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 9.

went."[57] Nevertheless, the camp meeting took on deep and personal importance to him, as it marked his transition from "darkness and distress" into the "fresh triumph of the grace of God." Early on Sunday morning, in a "splendidly illuminated" grove occupied with "the happy company" of hundreds of people from across the nearby towns of Vermont, Scott made a public profession of faith that served as "the great victory" for him. Later in the evening, Scott brought his two younger brothers, Ephraim and Samuel, to what he called "this consecrated spot" so they could join him in conversion.[58]

This experience at that camp meeting is where Scott's personal story intersects with the larger history of the United States and the many social movements that transformed it from the 1800s through the 1840s. The first of these historical forces was the Second Great Awakening. Much like Theodore Dwight Weld, a convert to evangelical Christianity who became a leading abolitionist, the awakening shaped his life and he, in turn, shaped it. Revivals, camp meetings, and conversions like the one that Orange, Ephraim, and Samuel Scott experienced were hardly unique. Through the preaching of popular ministers such as Charles Grandison Finney, an effective and powerful evangelist in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Second Great Awakening revitalized a stagnant American Christianity through emotional revivals and a popular message that all people could attain salvation through repentance. These preachers succeeded by tapping into the latent religious sentiment of many Americans like Orange Scott, who expressed an "their eagerness to hear," as one Methodist minister termed it.[59]

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[57] Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 57.
[58] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 8-9.
[59] J.A. Merrill, "Extracts from two letters from the Rev. Joseph A. Merrill, From the N.Y. Methodist Magazine," *Religious Reporter*, July 22, 1820, vol. 1, no. 16, p. 3, Readex Early American Newspapers (accessed July 16, 2021).

The revivals of the Second Great Awakening spread from New England across Upstate New York, but the Connecticut River and the surrounding area became a place of particular interest to many evangelical proponents of revivalism. Rev. Joseph A. Merrill noted that this area of “twenty or thirty miles” on both sides of the river was fertile land for the Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the major evangelical denominations of the Second Great Awakening. “My congregations have been large and serious,” he observed about the people of the Vermont-Connecticut border. The greatest obstacle to revival in that portion of the country, he believed, was that the demand of potential converts greatly exceeded the supply of available ministers.[60] This problem, he admitted, was not exclusive to the Methodists; even the more established Congregationalists faced the same issue. Merrill traveled from the northernmost towns along the Connecticut River, such as Guildhall, Vermont and down the river to Haverhill, New Hampshire, a town less than twenty miles away from Scott’s then-residence of Barre.

One camp-meeting that Merrill held at Concord, New Hampshire, offers insight into what these revivals looked like. Taking place out-of-doors, as people often termed it, they were major events, with numbers Merrill estimated being in the thousands. They involved multiple sessions of “prayer meeting[s]” and, when a person “experienced a change” they were allowed to join and make a public profession of faith. In this camp-meeting, Merrill claimed that thirty-five of the three thousand attendees publicly converted, with “hundreds deeply awakened.”[61] As such, these camp meetings were not exclusively focused on winning converts in the present; they also sought to plant the seeds of future conversions.

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[60] Merrill, “Extracts from two letters from the Rev. Joseph A. Merrill,” 3.
[61] Merrill, “Extracts from two letters from the Rev. Joseph A. Merrill,” 3.

After his camp-meeting at Concord, Merrill crossed the Connecticut River and "made a short visit to Vermont" to "attend [sic] one at Barre."[62] Merrill offers a noteworthy sketch of the state of religion in Barre, Vermont, at the same time as Scott's religious awakening:

> Great and marvellous were the displays of Divine power at this place. Between four and five thousand were present on the Sabbath. An awful sense of God rested upon the people: - such solemnity, it was acknowledged, had seldom been seen; the mournful cries of the wounded, and the songs of the ransomed, afforded a subject both affecting and delightful. Several circumstances took place worthy of notice. One in particular: - three young men came on the ground with a view to make a disturbance; but no sooner were they arrived, than one of them was struck with an awful sense of his crimes; and yielding to his convictions, was soon so overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt that the natural functions of his body seemed suspended, and he sunk to the ground. When a little recovered, entreated the prayers of God's people, fell to praying for himself, and, in answer to prayer, God had mercy on him, and he came out triumphant. At this meeting about 40 were the happy subjects of the work, among whom were several persons of respectability. The good Lord is truly favoring us in this part of His heritage. Truly I never knew a time when there was so great a cry for preachers of the word.[63]

Merrill's description offers insight into what the revivals along the Connecticut River looked like, describing one that took place in the town in which Orange Scott lived. These were deeply emotional experiences, and the account of the Barre camp-meeting echoes Scott's own recollections in many respects: the weekend of prayer reaching its climax with the victory of conversion on the Sabbath. Scott and his two brothers could easily have been or have known of the trio of young men that Merrill highlighted, examples of the many individuals touched by the emotive awakening sweeping that part of the United States.

The years 1820-1821 served as a transitory period for Scott in which he moved from hired laborer to itinerant preacher. Conversion had changed his demeanor in ways that acquaintances found inspiring or irritating. One minister remarked that Scott brought "life and energy" to his town's "general coldness." Others were dissatisfied with Scott's seeming

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[62] Merrill, "Extracts from two letters from the Rev. Joseph A. Merrill," 3.
[63] Merrill, "Extracts from two letters from the Rev. Joseph A. Merrill," 3.

ignorance, a critique Scott openly embraced: "I knew that I had little or no qualifications, except sincerity and the love of God."[64] He attended public meetings, received his license to preach, and formally joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in the months after his conversion. But he did not immediately leave his old life behind. Scott remained a poor wage laborer working in the fields while attending religious services on Sundays. This all changed during a quarterly meeting in September 1821. Two things occurred that again transformed Scott's life. First, he underwent another religious experience that left a profound "effect upon my mind."[65] Reflecting in his autobiography, Scott said, "I did not feel as if I could lift another farming tool, or do anything more at manual labor."[66] Second, he met Squire B. Hascall, a Methodist preacher in charge of the Barnard circuit. The Hascall meeting provided Scott with the possibility to fulfill his newfound desire to leave hired work behind and pursue a life in the ministry. Hascall offered Scott the opportunity to assist him for the remainder of the year as an itinerant preacher. On November 1, 1821, Scott began the approximately forty-mile trip to the Barnard circuit to begin his ministry.

Orange Scott was almost completely destitute when he began this new phase of his life. "I was without a carriage, without a horse, without a companion, without an earthly friend, almost a stranger, and in debt $30."[67] Over the following six weeks on the Barnard circuit, Scott delivered sermons and met with church members. This involved mostly traveling by foot from town to town, with the lone exception of a lame horse that Hascall lent him for two weeks. Describing this as "a most providential opening for my introduction to the work of gospel

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[64] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 58-59.
[65] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 12.
[66] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 12.
[67] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 12-13. On April 1, 1821, Scott had made an agreement with two other men to work for six months, with each of them working a week for $10 a month. After deciding in September to join Hascall, Scott went into debt to hire a substitute.

ministry," Scott closed out the year of 1821 as a novice itinerant preacher. It was, he later recalled, "one of the happiest periods of my life."[68]

Although the ministry was generally an effective avenue for social and economic mobility, itinerant ministers in the Methodist Episcopal Church did not enjoy an easy life. Itinerancy was a path to the stability of the stationed ministry and advancement through the church hierarchy, but the position was extraordinarily demanding. It taxed ministers physically, mentally, financially, and spiritually. Luther Lee, a friend of Orange Scott's, recounted the difficulties he faced during his own itinerancy in articles he wrote in the 1840s for Scott's *True Wesleyan*. According to Lee, itinerant ministers were frequently underpaid and sometimes forced to travel hundreds of miles at the whims of the church. And during this time, these ministers still needed to study for an examination that they were required to take after their second year. Most people who entered the itinerancy, however, were zealous evangelists and therefore liable to overwork themselves. In Lee's experience, itinerant responsibilities meant that Methodist preachers were generally "shorter lived than those of other denominations."[69]

After his first year in itinerancy, Scott moved to Bath, Maine to work on the Lyndon circuit between 1822 and 1824. The New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church updated these assignments during their annual regional conferences, held in different cities and towns across New England in the spring or early summer. During the 1822-1823 and 1823-1824 conference years, Scott was received and sustained on trial as a local preacher. However, his first year on the Lyndon circuit ended abruptly when Presiding Elder John Lindsey

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[68] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 13-14.
[69] Trials of an Itinerant. Editorial Remarks of the Above.," *True Wesleyan*, August 22, 1846, vol. 4, no. 34, p. 2-3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). "Methodist Itinerancy.," *True Wesleyan*, March 13, 1847, vol. 5, no. 11, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

ordered him to move to the Danville circuit to assist the lone minister stationed there.[70] Scott returned to Lyndon for the full 1823-1824 year to work alongside John F. Adams and Samuel Kelly. Scott said the three worked "in greatest harmony" and estimated that their revivals in the Lyndon circuit had won the church between two hundred and four hundred converts. At the 1824 annual conference at Barnard, Vermont, Scott was ordained as a deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church and again assigned to the Lyndon circuit for the following year.[71]

During the 1825 annual conference, held at East Cambridge, Scott received a new assignment, stationing him in Charlestown. The town was located across the Boston Harbor from the city of Boston on the Charlestown Peninsula, the same location where the Battle of Bunker Hill had been fought during the American Revolution. That historical connection was not lost on Scott. "I received my appointment the day the Battle of Bunker Hill was celebrated, and Webster delivered his oration," he recollected in his autobiography.[72] Given its proximity to Boston and its history, this position came with far more prestige than the larger and more rural circuits of Lyndon and Barnard. The station had been founded by Dr. Wilbur Fisk, the principal of Wesleyan University at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, and an esteemed voice within the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Scott felt himself unqualified for this new assignment, later recalling that "I was but a boy in the ministry." He nevertheless changed his mind after receiving support and encouragement from Fisk himself and from Edward Hyde, who was then the presiding elder of the Boston District.[73]

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[70] The Methodist Episcopal Church was a national organization composed of several smaller annual conferences. The national church was governed by bishops who were elected for lifetime appointments by the annual conferences. These conferences, such as Scott's New England Conference, were further subdivided into several districts that were each overseen by a presiding elder.
[71] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 15-16.
[72] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 16.
[73] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 16-17.

Having grown up and worked in and around small towns for his entire life, the move to Charlestown, with its proximity to Boston, was as much a cultural shift as a professional one. Nevertheless, Scott saw considerable opportunity in his new appointment even if it changed the extent and scope of his ministerial duties. He had more leisure time since he did not need to travel a significant distance to fulfill the same responsibilities. He could conduct more house-to-house visits with church members and spend his spare time studying and refining his preaching. During the 1825-1826 conference year, Scott estimated that between twelve and fifteen were converted. Although these numbers paled in comparison with the large-scale revivals, Scott later said that he found "church and society were well united" in Charlestown. It was, in his words, a time of "refreshing seasons" for him.[74]

This appointment, which served as a great promotion for a young minister in his early years in the church, laid the foundation for Scott's continued rise to prominence in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1820s. His early work in the rural circuits of Barnard and Lyndon had shown his effectiveness as a popular preacher, but his new assignment in Charlestown presented different challenges. His appointment afforded the New England Conference the chance to gauge his talents in a new environment and follow his activities more closely, giving Scott an opportunity to prove himself capable of rising even higher within the Methodist hierarchy. The following two chapters explore a crucial event in this journey. Scott was forced to not merely preach the Gospel or convert the masses, but to publicly defend his church and vindicate its theological teachings.

[74] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 17.

Chapter 2: Orange Scott vs. Thomas Whittemore, Part I

On June 11, 1831, *Trumpet*, a Universalist newspaper based in Boston, published an article announcing its plans to republish a series of essays that had appeared in the paper almost five years earlier. These articles, which amounted to what the paper described as a "Controversy with a Methodist," concerned the public and spirited theological dispute over universal salvation and future judgment between Rev. Orange Scott, then stationed in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and Dr. Thomas Whittemore, an editor of *Trumpet*.[1]

The Universalists had decided to revive the controversy because the newspaper had recently undergone a name change from *Universalist Magazine* to *Trumpet*, and the editors explained that they had received "several requests" to "transfer" the entirety of the debate between Scott and Whittemore to the pages of the new paper. But preserving the record was only one reason they chose to dedicate space to the matter. Frustrated that the *Zion's Herald*, the official organ for the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, had opted to only "republish the *Methodist* part of the controversy," they decided to take a different course of action. It was imperative to promote what they viewed as "an impartial discussion of the subject" that "brings all these [views] before the public. ... a desideratum in the polemics of New England."[2]

Orange Scott's arguments during the controversy were viewed by the Universalists as reflective of "the sum and substance of all the arguments which that sect [Methodism] can urge against Universalism." But Scott's arguments had led the editors of *Trumpet* to go so far as to allege that he could not have been the sole author. "Altho' the letters go in the name of Orange

[1] "Controversy with a Methodist.," *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, June 11, 1831, vol 3, no. 50, p. 198, ProQuest, American Periodicals..
[2] "Controversy with a Methodist.," 198.

Scott," the paper concluded, "we have the best reason to believe that they were produced by the joint efforts of all Methodist clergymen … residing in the neighborhood of Boston." Their proof for this serious allegation: a single Methodist minister had purportedly plagiarized Scott's work. Nevertheless, *Trumpet's* allegation of group authorship underscores its editors' belief that the articles were the strongest representation of the Methodist perspective respecting salvation.[3]

This chapter and the subsequent chapter are at once descriptive and analytical. They explore the contours and character of the debate between Orange Scott and Thomas Whittemore between December 2, 1826 and April 7, 1827. Their argument, covered in the pages of the *Universalist Magazine*, explored the central theological disagreement between Universalism and Methodism: "judgment after death, and punishment in the future state."[4] It represented a crucial moment in Orange Scott's life that took place almost halfway between his conversion to Christianity and his conversion to abolitionism. It offers a window into how his religious beliefs developed separate from his antislavery views. However, these earlier religious opinions remained deeply connected to his subsequent abolitionism since he had arrived at the latter because of the former. His debate with Whittemore, therefore, should be understood as an important episode that highlights his theology independent of any singular issue and the way he then applied that theology to the world around him.

By the 1820s, Methodism and Universalism were denominations on the ascendency. They both rose as a backlash to what Nathan Hatch aptly termed the "Reformed Orthodoxy."

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[3] "Controversy with a Methodist.," 198. The newspaper alleged that Rev. Timothy Merritt had taken the Orange Scott articles and "g[a]ve them to the public as his own," but offered no further information or evidence that Scott had not been the sole author of the articles. Moreover, as will be discussed later, one of Whittemore's recurring counterarguments against Scott during the controversy was to argue that he was out of step with Methodist thinking. Were the articles written by a committee of Methodists, such incongruities would not have existed. Nevertheless, *Trumpet* simply declared, "we think we are justified in the opinion we have expressed."

[4] Thomas Whittemore, "To the Readers of the Magazine.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 2, 1826, vol. 8, no. 24, p. 95, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

This religious establishment, dominated by northeastern Calvinist intellectuals in New England, came under increasing scrutiny as insurgent and populist religious denominations challenged its endorsement of the status quo, its convoluted teachings, and its power.[5] Traditional Methodism and Universalism, however, criticized Calvinism from very different theological perspectives. With the Calvinist consensus on the decline by the 1820s, the diverse religious movements that had successfully challenged it lost their common adversity and began to grapple with one another as foils. The debate between Scott's Methodism and Whittemore's Universalism, then, signifies the dawn of a new chapter in the history of religion in the United States.

Scott embraced what could be considered traditional and orthodox Protestant views on most theological questions. This is an important fact that offers greater nuance to the story of abolitionism since it illustrates the nature of the theological diversity that existed within its ranks. This diversity included difference of opinion regarding the major disputes between sects. While Quakers and other more radical groups had opposed slavery from an earlier time, the ranks of abolitionism included those like Scott who adopted more mainstream and conservative views in their theology, religious dogma, gender roles, and social mores. There were different paths to abolitionism and, for Orange Scott, that path was theologically conservative.

This theological debate was Scott's first foray into the public sphere and into a major controversy, and it shaped the remainder of his life. The controversy provides a glimpse into the origins of Scott's penchant for debate through the medium of the newspaper. He used other platforms, but growing up with newspapers like the *North Star* had shown him the power of the

[5] Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 170-181. Hatch argued that Calvinism came under fire from Methodists and Universalists over its teaching on salvation theology, specifically Predestination: the belief that God had preordained people for salvation or damnation. Since Hatch examines the challenge to Calvinism rather than how these denominations viewed one another, he does not pit these two denominations and their radically different responses to Calvinism into conversation with one another.

press. It became a vehicle for him to convey his opinions and worldview to the public on the major questions of the age.

The dispute with Whittemore also reveals that while Scott grew as a person and a thinker over the course of his life, he stayed largely consistent in his identity, his theology, and his temperament. Although he harbored hostile views towards Universalism, he nevertheless agreed to engage in open and candid discussion with its adherents. He never doubted the superiority of his viewpoints on theological or moral questions, but the debate with Whittemore showed that he would not shy away from conversing with those who thought differently than he did. And Whittemore arguably helped imbue Scott with a zeal to persuade that dominated the remaining two decades of his life by teaching him that he had the "obligation to convince."[6] This sense of duty carried into Scott's later efforts to free Methodism from the influence of slavery and to challenge what he saw as the extremism within the abolitionist ranks.

This debate laid the foundation for much of his subsequent activity in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the antislavery movement. As Scott said in his opening communication in the *Universalist Magazine*, the concept of debate was important because it gave him the opportunity to do exactly what Whittemore had reportedly told him during their first meeting. It gave Scott the chance, as he put it, "to be useful to some of my fellow creatures, who otherwise may never receive the needed admonition" and "those sentiments which [they] will never be likely otherwise to hear."[7] This was not a choice for him, but a sense of duty that "induced" him to act "in defence of what I conceive to be the truth as it is in Jesus."[8]

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[6] Thomas Whittemore, "To the Readers of the Magazine.," 95.
[7] O. Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore," *Universalist Magazine*, December 2, 1826, vol. 8, no. 24, p. 93, ProQuest, American Periodicals. It is worth noting that in his reply to Orange Scott's first communication, Thomas Whittemore objected to this claim and declared "You are ignorant of the character of Universalists, if you think they do not read the writings of their opponents." See Thomas Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott," *Universalist Magazine*, December 9, 1826, vol. 8, no. 25, American Periodicals, ProQuest, p. 97.
[8] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore," 93.

The connection between religion and societal reform cannot be overstated when analyzing this controversy. The controversy between the two men touched upon major theological questions: the proper way to read and interpret the Bible, divine justice and retribution against evildoers, and the very nature of free will. At its core, however, this debate was not just a theoretical conversation over differences in religious doctrine. For both Scott and Whittemore, religion played a much larger role in society and the controversy reflected that shared attitude. This religious argument had a practical undercurrent that revolved around whether Methodism or Universalism was the superior moral framework for society. For Scott, Universalism deprived humans of their agency and their accountability and created an unjust and nihilistic world devoid of meaning. His critique of Universalism underscores his belief that Methodism and evangelical Christianity were instrumental components for the moral betterment of humanity. These tools of reform could only exist and thrive within a traditional theological framework.

Whittemore and Scott, despite their differences, both entered the ministries of their respective churches in the same year of 1821.[9] Whittemore rose to prominence in the Universalist community of Boston and eventually received a larger audience as an editor of the *Universalist Magazine*. Scott, by the middle of the 1820s, had climbed through the ranks of the Methodist Episcopal Church until he was stationed at Charlestown, Massachusetts. That both men came to embody the beliefs and teachings of Universalism and Methodism in this debate illustrates their growing influence within their denominations.

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[9] "The Southern Association," *Universalist Magazine*, June 23, 1821, vol. 2, no. 52, p. 207, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

The debate began after Scott delivered a sermon in early 1826 critical of Universalism.[10] This sermon might have been the direct cause, but it was still only a contributing factor. The larger cause for debate stemmed from Scott's overarching and outspoken hostility to Universalism since arriving in Charlestown. That hostility caught the attention of Boston's Universalist community. In one instance, in April 1826, the *Universalist Magazine* published an account from "J.R." who alleged that he and his wife had been confronted by Orange Scott during a visit in Charlestown. J.R. claimed that Scott tried to bar them from going to a Methodist love-feast. The episode serves as both a window into how Universalists viewed Scott and how he viewed their religious faith prior to the controversy with Whittemore.

J.R.'s central grievance against Scott stemmed from his belief that Scott had disrespected him. Upon he and his wife's arrival, Scott informed them that he had to ask them both "a few questions" before they could attend the love-feast. According to J.R., Scott asked him if he "was seriously minded, and whether [he] was *seeking religion*." J.R. found the question offensive, "as if he thought me to be some careless, irreligious fellow" and then replied, "I was no more so at that particular time, than I was generally." J.R.'s reply aggravated Scott, who reportedly told J.R. that he did not know if he could allow him to attend the love-feast.[11]

Given his involvement proselytizing at mass religious gatherings in the New England countryside, the question was in line with Scott's earlier work. Charlestown, after all, was Scott's largest assignment to that point in his life and his first time stationed near a major city like Boston. All his earlier religious experience was in rural New England circuits. By Scott's own telling, he often interacted with people like his younger self: people who attended religious

[10] Thomas Whittemore, "To the Readers of the Magazine.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 2, 1826, vol. 8, no. 24, p. 95, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[11] J.R., "Some Account for a Love Feast, lately held in Charlestown.," *Universalist Magazine*, April 22, 1826, vol. 7, no. 44, p. 175, ProQuest, American Periodicals..

events in search of religion. The question might have been slightly unusual to J.R., but it reflected the nature of all of Scott's evangelical work. It is also important to note that love-feasts were a uniquely Methodist practice that dated back to the time of John Wesley. They were religious services where Methodists would periodically gather to "'eat bread,' as the early Christians did," in emulation of the early church's reenactment of the Last Supper from the Gospel. It was, therefore, an act that brought their religious community together.[12] This was exclusionary by its very nature and not a religious event intended for the general public.

Scott then completely disregarded J.R. and directly addressed his wife, asking her the same question he had asked her husband. He followed up with questions about when she had converted to Christianity. During her explanation of her religious journey, J.R.'s wife added that she had "been induced to embrace the doctrine of Universal Salvation." J.R. informed the readers of the *Universalist Magazine* that Scott invited his wife to go to the love-feast without him and, when she declined, asked her if "she would not go to heaven without [her husband] than go to Hell with [him]." She answered that there was no such thing as Hell, or any other place of "separation." Scott told them that he did not believe it would be right to "enter into any discourse about doctrines" and promptly left the room. He returned after "a little time" and informed the couple that he had conferred with his fellow Methodists and would admit them.[13]

It is important to note that Scott's hesitancy to admit Universalists aligns with Wesley's perspective on the purpose of love-feasts. J.R. nor his wife were Methodists. When Scott asked if they were interested in becoming Methodists, both answered in the negative. Their interest in attending the love-feast was therefore purely academic. Methodists were generally protective of

[12] John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, Reprint of 1872 Version), 258-259.
[13] J.R., "Some Account for a Love Feast, lately held in Charlestown.," 176.

this denominational event and reluctant to allow entry to non-Methodists. As Wesley himself had noted, "tickets" were proof that a person was a member or prospective member of the Methodist "community."[14] Given the history of love-feasts, and their importance to the denomination, J.R.'s complaints in the *Universalist Magazine* exemplified ignorance and, perhaps, lack of respect for Methodist traditions. Unlike Methodist revivals or Sunday services, love feasts were a closed event for members and prospective members. By their own admission, neither J.R. nor his wife expressed any interest in becoming Methodists or abandoning Universalism. Where the couple saw Scott's reluctant to provide them tickets as intolerance, the fact that he ultimately let them in should instead be viewed as an act of liberality.

The love-feast did not end up being a particularly pleasant experience for J.R. or his wife. He thought it "was well begun and continued very well" until a Methodist from Cambridge excoriated Universalism and "those who embrace the doctrine of the salvation of all mankind."[15] It is noteworthy how J.R. juxtaposed the man he identified as "Mr. Blake" with Orange Scott. The contrast, despite not being particularly favorable to Scott, seems to explain in part why he served as the Methodist voice in the debate with Whittemore.

In contrast with Scott, who seemed to offend J.R. but had nonetheless eschewed argument with the couple, Blake criticized the doctrines of Universalism and then carried those attacks further. He denounced believers in Universalism. "He [Blake] began to rave, and jump up, and stamp on the floor, and raise his voice, til he got it to its loudest tone," J.R. recounted this scene of "horror and confusion," adding that Blake clapped his hands "with great violence" and appeared "more like one insane." But Blake did not stop there. The storm outside, J.R. noted,

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[14] John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, Reprint of 1872 Version), 256-257.
[15] J.R., "Some Account for a Love Feast, lately held in Charlestown," 176.

only increased "the zeal of the speaker" and the minister became so extreme that others "cautioned him." Undeterred, Blake reportedly retorted, "I don't care whose feelings I hurt" before turning talking about hell and, according to J.R., used "the name of God in vain as much as any man I ever heard."[16]

The love-feast continued to deteriorate even after Blake stepped down. Another individual, identified as Mr. Bracket, rose and "became vehement against those who believe in universal reconciliation." J.R.'s language about Bracket and his "bitterness" painted the picture of a man unhinged and out of control. "He raved and foamed," J.R. described, "stamped and scolded until he raised his voice so loud we could scarcely understand half he said."[17]

In J.R.'s article, there is a clear dichotomy between Orange Scott on one hand and Blake and Bracket on the other. The first half of the article focused on J.R.s interaction with Scott before the love-feast and the second portion described his experiences at the love-feast. This contrast was crystalized by Scott's actions. While J.R. did not necessarily paint a flattering picture of Scott, he did not receive the same treatment, the same descriptions, or the same condemnations that J.R. reserved for Blake and Bracket. Scott behaved in nearly the opposite manner. While Blake attacked "those who embrace the doctrine of the salvation of all mankind" and Bracket "became vehement against those who believe in universal reconciliation to God," Scott exhibited no such behavior. Blake and Bracket attacked people who believed in Universalism; Scott's greatest offense was merely questioning whether he could or should allow Universalists to attend a Methodist love-feast.

It is important to note that Scott was a fierce debater and often pugilistic towards those with whom he disagreed, but he seldom attacked people on a personal level. He reserved his

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[16] J.R., "Some Account for a Love Feast, lately held in Charlestown," 176.
[17] J.R., "Some Account for a Love Feast, lately held in Charlestown," 176.

attacks for ideas and, with few exceptions, eschewed direct attacks on people themselves. He thought Universalism was flawed theology, slavery a great moral evil, and pacifism an incorrect application of principle, but he often avoided attacking the people who espoused those ideas and he instead directed his rhetorical fire on their words and their principles.

That Orange Scott did not join Blake or Bracket in their invectives against the believers of Universalism during the love-feast speaks to that willingness for principled debate that characterized his life. In under eight months, he would instead have his writings published in the *Universalist Magazine* and he would be locked in a fierce debate with Thomas Whittemore over the theology of Universalism and the doctrine of universal salvation. He might not have wished to debate those doctrines at the love-feast, but by December 1826, he was ready to have an open conversation on that subject with a leading figure in Boston's Universalist community. But it would be a debate over ideas, not personalities.

Scott's criticisms of Universalism continued to garner the attention of several Universalists in Boston and the surrounding area. One of these individuals, a Universalist from Cambridgeport, reached out to Thomas Whittemore after listening to one of Scott's sermons "against the doctrine of Universal Salvation."[18] Frustrated by what he viewed as a "public attack upon this doctrine" he offered to host Scott at his home to discuss the subject. Scott declined the invitation, but said he would "converse" on the matter with "any one who would call upon him at his study."[19]

After being contacted by a friend, Whittemore accepted Scott's offer and met with him to propose what he later termed "a fair discussion of that very interesting subject." Although

[18] Thomas Whittemore, "To the Readers of the Magazine.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 2, 1826, vol. 8, no. 24, p. 95, ProQuest, American Periodicals. It is worth noting that Scott's sermon, by Whittemore's own description, targeted Universalism rather than Universalists themselves.
[19] Whittemore, "To the Readers of the Magazine.," 95.

initially hesitant, Scott agreed to partake in a debate in the pages of the *Universalist Magazine*. It took several months to iron out the terms of the debate that culminated in what Whittemore considered to be a “very liberal” proposal. The *Universalist Magazine* “promised unconditionally” to publish six articles from Orange Scott over the course of a six-month period on the condition that his essays be “temperately written.” Scott would receive two pages in the four-page *Universalist Magazine* for each of his essays. This debate, which Whittemore announced on December 2, 1826, would explore “the doctrine of judgment and punishment in the future state of existence,” with Scott writing “in favor” of that view.[20]

Scott would utilize the tools and tactics he acquired during this chapter in his life when debating subsequent issues like slavery and non-resistance. The issues of universalism, abolition, and non-resistance all represented opportunities for Scott to convey his truth on those subjects and to persuade others. Moreover, this first public debate with Whittemore gave him a greater appreciation for the idea of free speech that he carried into the 1830s and 1840s. Whittemore himself saw this debate as proof of Universalism’s tolerance for opposing views and an example of “the freest inquiry in matters of religion” that other denominations would be wise to emulate.[21] It would be a controversy that, beyond the topic itself, left an impression on Scott.

The controversy over Universalism shaped and influenced Scott’s worldview, especially as it related to argumentation and its merits. Debate – the intellectual clash by pen and word of two individuals of opposing viewpoints – was not a mere luxury or form of self-indulgence. It

[20] Whittemore, “To the Readers of the Magazine.,” 95. O. Scott, “Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.,” *Universalist Magazine*, December 30, 1826, vol. 8, no. 28, p. 109, ProQuest, American Periodicals. In a postscript to his second essay, Scott added context to the debate terms he and Whittemore had agreed to. According to Scott, Whittemore had originally offered him one page in the *Universalist Magazine*, but the two had ultimately settled on two pages.
[21] Whittemore, “To the Readers of the Magazine.,” 95.

was an important duty. The obligation was public in its very nature. Only after deliberating with Whittemore on the potential benefits of a public discussion did Scott agreed to participate.[22]

Scott published his first essay on December 2, 1826, marking one of his first recorded public forays into the medium of the newspaper. It read more like a sermon than an analytical essay and even began with an opening prayer. On the whole, as he declared in his opening remarks, "The Doctrine of a Future Judgment" was "among those truths which are the most clearly revealed, and most explicitly taught in the word of God." Scott focused on proving that judgment must occur in a future state in time, buttressing his contention with scriptural evidence supplemented by moral and philosophical arguments. His case hinged upon four major, interconnected points.

First, he contended that human beings should be viewed as "probationers for eternal life," meaning that they would have to face judgment at a later point in time and not in the present. Probation lasted the entire life of a person and existed because of free will. Humans, Scott argued, were created by God with the freedom to "form their characters" and were given the tools by God to do just that. As he said later in the communication, this meant that humans "hav[e] in this world the opportunity and the means of obtaining eternal salvation."[23]

During the state of probation, humans were what other evangelicals like Charles Finney considered to be moral free agents. They were not, as Calvinist denominations often taught, predestined for either salvation or damnation. Instead, Scott argued, humans had the capacity to change. They were neither inherently good nor hopelessly evil. He noted:

> Their characters are actually passing through various changes from good to bad, and from bad to good, as well as constantly exhibiting various degrees of progress both in virtue and vice; while the mixture of good and evil in them, together with a striking

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[22] Whittemore, "To the Readers of the Magazine.," 95.

[23] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 2, 1826, vol. 8, no. 24, p. 93-94, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

> correspondence in the dispensations of Providence towards them, clearly indicate a state of probation, and not of retribution.[24]

In the present state of probation, people had the opportunity to attain salvation by the cultivation of morality. Enjoying free will, humans had the agency to choose their own path and could do so with God's grace.

Probation, by its very nature, was linked with judgment. "If you allow one of these, probation or judgment," Scott reasoned, "you do in effect allow the other." But probation had to precede any form of judgment or retribution. Scott used the example of a worker accepted on trial to prove his point. An employee's future employment hinged upon the job they performed while on probation. It did not make sense, he argued, to pass judgment before the period of probation ended because "you judge him according to his works, and either reject ... or establish him in business."[25] If the present world existed as a place of probation, then it followed that the judgment could only occur in the future state.

The second major pillar of Scott's initial essay flowed from this first point and grappled with the nature of God's justice. As "a righteous Governor," God "will fully reward the righteous and punish the wicked."[26] However, justice was not always realized in an imperfect world. The concept of present probation and future judgment, then, had to be true because God allowed evil to exist and evil things to happen. This was an important to Scott because it preserved free will. "He [God] does not do this [judgment] in the present world," he argued, "therefore he will do it in the next."[27]

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[24] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.
[25] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.
[26] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.
[27] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.

The juxtaposition between present probation and future judgment, when coupled with free will, allowed Scott to reconcile why a just God allowed evil to exist. "Many sins," he wrote, "yea, the greatest sins, often go unpunished in this world." But it was not God who inflicted these evils; humans exercised God's gift of freedom to do evil. He noted numerous examples, from robbery and assassination to hypocrisy and fraud. Of particular note was Scott's emphasis on "tyranny of all kinds ... from those exercised over the African slave up to that exercised over millions of cringing vassals …."[28] This is Scott's first recorded statement regarding the institution of slavery.

Evils often went unpunished in this world because of human fallibility coupled God allowing humans to commit wicked acts. That did not mean evil would prevail in the end. If God truly was a "righteous Governor," as Scott had argued, then evil needed to be punished at some point in time. But to punish in the present would deprive humans of free will, indicating to him that judgment could only occur at some *future* point in time. "Though the sentence against these evil works is not executed speedily," he declared, "let it not be thought that justice will sleep forever." To Scott, that time would be the future judgment at the end of the world.[29]

To further support present probation and future judgment, Scott argued that human beings were "an accountable creature." In all stages and stations of life, they were held liable for their actions, good and bad. More specifically, they answered to someone or something else. Children were accountable to their parents and servants to their masters. Subjects were accountable to the laws of their country. Scott further reasoned that humans must be accountable to God and accountable to the laws and morality that God created. Accountability, then, played

[28] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.
[29] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.

an important role in Scott's understanding of justice. Given the imperfections of the world, God could only be perfect through notions of free will and the future judgment of evildoers.[30] Disagreements over the nature of human existence as moral free agents and the character of God served as the fundamental points of contention between Scott and Whittemore.

The third and lengthiest portion of Scott's argument rested on citing Biblical proof. "The doctrine is clearly scriptural," he asserted, boasting that it "is contained in a thousand places in the word of God." He then offered numerous biblical passages that he believed undermined the Universalist teaching that judgment existed exclusively in the past and present. The use of tenses as they appeared in the Bible was crucial. Scott noted that the writers of these verses respecting judgment employed the future tense rather than the present. Citing Romans 2:12, 16 as an example, a verse which used the phrase "in the day when God shall judge …", he concluded that this framing indicated judgment would occur at "a set time" and at a later date.[31]

In many respects, these biblical passages were designed to be self-explanatory to the reader and to speak for themselves. Scott offered limited exegesis for each passage that he quoted, often highlighting a particular word or phrase or providing a limited context. He built his argument with those passages that invoked the future tense, spoke of judgment after death, or even used the phrase "future judgment."[32]

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[30] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93. This view that evil often went unpunished in the world seemed to set up Orange Scott's subsequent argument that Universalism was in error because of its belief that judgment was "a progressive rewarding and punishing of men through their whole lives, through successive generations from the beginning to the end of the world."

[31] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93. During this communication, Scott directly cited 14 biblical passages to support his theological claims, with all but one coming from the New Testament. It is worth noting that Scott drew from the King James Version of the Bible and, as such, all historical interpretations of biblical passages will be done with that fact in mind.

[32] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.

This scriptural portion introduced and led into the fourth major pillar to Scott's argument. It is also one of the most instrumental elements for understanding the difference, as Scott understood it, between his theological worldview and that of Thomas Whittemore. That point of distinction pertained explicitly to how both sides read and interpreted the Bible. For Scott, the Bible was a sacred and infalliable text meant to be easily read and understood. An ordinary person could comprehend its literal truth and metaphorical allegory. Scott's biblical exegesis hinged upon this self-evident reading of the Bible, and he opposed what he viewed as the Universalist effort to transfigure passages with a clear and obvious meaning.

Scott made this juxtaposition unambiguously clear as the communication reached its conclusion but introduced this concept at three earlier junctures in the scriptural section of the essay. These examples were Proverbs 1:24-27, the parable of the tares in the Gospel of Matthew, and John 5:28-29. In each case, Scott criticized the Universalist interpretation of those passages and argued that their more liberal reading of Scripture had led them to an incorrect conclusion.[33]

In the Proverbs passage, which warned of present disregard and future calamity, Scott explicitly connected "probation" with "the day of retribution."[34] However, Scott bluntly concluded that "the Universalists have a way to get over this," by "doing violence to the word of God."[35] Scott's phrasing is crucial. To him, Universalism entailed looking for ways to get around accepting that the Bible said what it said so that adherents could arrive at a preferred conclusion. Instead of reading meaning *out* of the text, they were reading preconceived ideas *into* it.

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[33] Scott based his understanding of Universalist theology on Hosea Ballou, a leading Universalist theologian in the late eighteenth century and opening decades of the nineteenth century. Specifically, Scott's understanding of Universalism on the parable of the wheat and the tares and the Gospel of John is explicitly drawn from Ballou's interpretation. For Ballou's discussion of the parable of the wheat and tares and John 5:28-29, see Hosea Ballou, *The Parables, of the New Testament, Scripturally Illustrated and Argumentatively Defended.* Edited by Hosea Ballou. 6th Edition (Boston, MA: Published by A. Tompkins, 1854), 72-81, 283-297. This work was published in 1812.
[34] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.
[35] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.

This same point about Universalists obscuring the Bible's obvious meaning reemerged in Scott's discussion of the parable of the tares. This passage in Matthew 13:24-30 told the story of a sower who had planted wheat in the field, only for an enemy to also sow tares in the field so that it would grow with the wheat. The landowner ordered the servants to let the wheat and tares grow together and separated at a later date, because removing the tares before then would uproot the wheat as well.

Scott immediately followed the parable with a discussion of the subsequent verses in which Jesus explained to his disciples exactly what the parable of the tares meant, covered in Matthew 13:36-43. Jesus clarified the symbolism behind everything: the field being the world, the enemy being the Devil, the reapers being the angels, and the harvest being the end of the world. As with many biblical passages that Scott cited, the parable spoke for itself as it related to present probation and future judgment. Since the meaning behind the parable came directly from the mouth of Jesus, Scott felt no further comments were necessary. He remarked in the following paragraph, "it would be the extreme of rashness to attempt giving his words a meaning different from that [which] they obviously convey."[36]

Scott, however, used the parable of the tares to emphasize the difference between his own biblical interpretation and that of the Universalists. That difference hinged upon the symbolic meaning of the wheat and tares in the parable. The passage described the good seed and wheat as "the children of the kingdom" and the tares as being "the children of the wicked one."[37] Although he acknowledged that he understood some Universalists interpreted the wheat and tares

[36] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 93.
[37] Matthew 13:38 (KJV).

as "truth and error" instead of good and wicked people, he still viewed their reading of the parable to be insufficient.[38]

This dispute over symbolism further exemplified a key difference between their theological interpretations. For Scott, he pointed to the phrase "*children of*," italicizing it for emphasis to indicate that it referred to actual people rather than abstract symbolic concepts like truth or falsehood. "Our Saviour," Scott declared, "must have known his own meaning."[39] Scott, however, did not entirely dismiss symbolism in the Bible . He readily acknowledged the symbolic nature of the parable. But Scott believed that Universalists had overemphasized a symbolic exegesis of the Bible to obscure the explicit meaning of symbolic passages. Moreover, using a parable, which was metaphorical by its very nature, allowed Scott to juxtapose Jesus' explanation of the symbolism with the Universalist interpretation. This enabled him to reinforce his overarching view that the Universalist interpretation required eschewing Jesus' interpretation in favor of certain doctrinal preferences.

The third major passage in Scott's scriptural section that emphasized the stark divide in how both sides interpreted the Bible came in the form of a discussion of John 5:28-29. This passage addressed the resurrection of the dead and its connection with salvation and damnation.[40] Scott argued that this passage was so obvious and so blatant about future judgment that the only way "to evade the force of this passage" was through the claim that "this resurrection is figurative." Calling this interpretation an "absurdity," Scott countered that the logic and meaning of the entire passage collapsed if deprived of its literal meaning because the

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[38] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 94.
[39] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 94.
[40] John 5:28-29 (KJV). This passage reads, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

passage in its entirety – beginning on John 5:25 – utilized both a figurative resurrection and a literal resurrection, with the figurative resurrection giving way to the literal one. The figurative resurrection took place in the present when sinners were resurrected from a death in sin into a life of holiness. The second resurrection expanded on this figurative resurrection. This distinction led Scott to conclude that by claiming that the second reference to resurrection was figurative, the Universalists had entirely sapped the passage of its meaning. "If you understand him to speak in both places of a figurative resurrection," he concluded, "you make him speak ridiculous tautology" since John 5:28-29 would then be an unnecessary repetition of John 5:25-27.[41]

Scott made this distinction between their interpretations more explicit in the final two paragraphs of the communication. He contended that the idea of a future judgment unified the Bible thematically and had driven the Apostles to preach that saints and sinners would eventually receive justice from God. Present probation and future judgment being "of set purpose," he claimed, was therefore "to rouse the attention of all, to alarm the fears of the guilty, to quicken the good, and assert the rights and maintain the justice of God's throne."[42]

This underscores a subtle but important theme that echoed through the first article and links it with the future chapters in Scott's life. Scott opposed Universalism because he believed it violated his interpretation of justice and was incompatible with free will. If there was no future judgment, there would be no justice for the evils inflicted in the world. The looming specter of future judgment corrected the errors of the wicked, ensuring they would be rewarded or punished for their free choices. Gaurentees of salvation regardless of human conduct, however, nullified this framework. Universalism thus negated the substance of biblical Christianity by making divine justice impossible to attain in the present world or the one to come.

[41] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 94.
[42] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 94.

With respect to their opposing views regarding the proper way to read and interpret the Bible, Scott also expressed concerns that Universalism paved the way for other theological errors. His critique of the way Universalists understood the Bible on questions of salvation was traditionalist and conservative. He believed in reading and interpreting the Bible as it had been done for centuries and he opposed what he saw as efforts to subvert longstanding interpretations in favor of novel ones. A more liberal reading of the Bible may not have been in complete error – Scott even agreed that a figurative interpretation had its place – but he worried that it paved the way for more egregious theological mistakes.

By taking symbolism and metaphorical exegesis too far, Universalism, Scott worried, was the beginning of theological error rather than the end of it. "The liberty which is sometimes taken with this subject," he cautioned, referring to the Universalist position on salvation and how they interpreted biblical passages to fit within that theological framework, "if carried to other points in divinity, would unhinge the mind in revelation and bring in infidelity like a flood." In his view, the Bible needed to have some literal components contained within it or else it would completely lose all meaning. Without those basic truths to link the text to reality, he warned that anyone could then "deny or trifle with every sacred thing."[43] This debate, then, even from the very first article in the *Universalist Magazine*, was more than a dispute over the theological merits of Universalist teaching on salvation. It was an argument that struck at the heart of the proper way to read and interpret the Bible.

Thomas Whittemore issued his reply to Scott the following week, December 9, 1826. This article can be roughly divided into three sections: a discourse on the merits of present probation and future retribution, an admonition of Scott's perceived ignorance of Universalist

[43] Scott, "To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 94.

teaching, and a rebuttal to some of Scott's biblical examples. Whittemore's tone exuded aggression, taking offense at what he deemed Scott's mischaracterizations of Universalist belief on one hand and castigating Scott's overarching theological assertions about salvation on the other. Furthermore, he made his condescension for Scott's entire article apparent from the onset. "You have advanced very little that is new," he scoffed, "I shall be under the necessity of repeating arguments."[44] For such an allegedly unimpressive opening case by Scott, Whittemore nevertheless felt compelled to write two separate articles over the span of two weeks to rebut it. This afforded him over twice the space as Scott during this stage of the controversy and that pattern would continue for the remainder of the debate.[45] Overall, Whittemore presented an able defense that left the two competitors evenly matched. Their articles, despite some faults, mischaracterizations, and misunderstanding, still signified a robust debate between the two men even if they spoke past one another at times.

Beginning with a rejection of the doctrine of future judgment on the basis that "there be no evidence to prove it," Whittemore identified the doctrine of present probation as the central underlying premise behind Scott's argument. "This doctrine [of future judgment]," he wrote, "is founded upon the supposition that men in this state are on probation for the next state of existence." "This [present probation] is your only object," he observed.[46] To defeat Scott's argument, then, Whittemore realized that he needed to undermine the concept of present probation. His rebuttal hinged upon three main premises.

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[44] Thomas Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 9, 1826, vol. 8, no. 25, p. 98, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[45] Thomas Whittemore's first article was published as two halves, with the first half appearing on December 9 and the second half being published on December 16. The first half was over two pages in length and the second was nearly three pages in the *Universalist Magazine*.
[46] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 97.

First, Whittemore argued that God's inherent goodness and love meant that he would never impose a state of probation on his creation. He relied on an emotional view of God rather than scriptural evidence. "This hypothesis I cannot grant," he wrote to Scott. In his view, the same God "who clothes the lilies of the field with beauty" and "whose hand is opened to satisfy 'the desire of every living thing'" would never "hazard the eternal welfare of his own offspring." If God cared, protected, and loved all of creation, it stood to reason that he would never "suspend it [their eternal welfare] upon the condition of man's living holily in a world where he is unavoidably exposed to temptation, especially if he knew that some of his creatures would be ruined forever." Moreover, if the obligation and purpose of creation was to give glory to God, Whittemore believed that a state of probation undermined that obligation. "It surely would be of no advantage of his creatures," he wrote, nor "would [it] in any way benefit or glorify him." He then turned the argument on its head and asked Scott to explain how probation would glorify God before crystalizing his own view: "I take the ground, that he never hazarded in any way the eternal interest of his creatures."[47] And to Whittemore, the doctrine of present probation went against the eternal interest of creation and the loving nature of God.

This attitude toward probation naturally gave way to Scott's writing on human nature. Scott's view of probation had meant that human life revolved around the development and inculcation of character and morality. In this case, Whittemore attempted to show that Scott's views on human nature and good and evil did not align with Methodist teaching on those subjects. "You here renounce two doctrines for which your sect has long contended," he declared, asking Scott "what becomes of the doctrine of total depravity on the one hand, or that of perfect sanctification on the other?"[48] However, Whittemore's assertation here displayed the

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[47] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 97.
[48] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 97.

same ignorance of opposing theology that he himself condemned. The former of these teachings, derived from Calvinist origin, was not purely Methodist. The Methodists may have embraced elements of it, but never taught total depravity in the same sense as Calvinist Christianity. Similarly, perfect sanctification and Christian perfectionism, ideas that were Wesleyan in origin, were not incompatible with Orange Scott's views.[49] Whittemore's subsequent defensiveness towards his perception that Scott was ignorant of Universalist teaching, when coupled with his own oversimplification of Methodist doctrines, illustrated that misunderstanding between the denominations cut both ways.

Nevertheless, Whittemore ceded the premise that humans had "mixed characters" between good and evil, and decided to engage Scott on that ground. The difference, then, rested on the fact that Whittemore believed that humans having good and evil within them did not actually prove that a state of probation existed. He instead suggested that it meant they were judged in the present, and that no future judgment was necessary. A noteworthy implication of this line of thinking – that worldly justice was synonymous with God's justice – remained an important component to the debate and will be discussed in greater detail later. Whittemore, however, carried this argument about human nature further to make the case that mixed characters suggested a sameness in humanity and a need for identical or nearly identical

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[49] John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as Believed and Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725, to the Year 1765* (Britstol: Printed by William Pine, 1766), Gale Primary Sources, Eighteenth Century Collections Online (accessed October 20, 2022), 2-43. In this booklet, John Wesley chronicled his understanding of Christian Perfection. He understood this concept as being part of a person's spiritual journey and their relationship with God. It was a state one could attain with the grace of God that, as he put it, made one "perfected in love" and could help immunize them from various worldly and internal sins. This doctrine was not without its share of controversy, even among Methodists, forcing Wesley to continuously qualify and clarify it. Ultimately, he arrived at a position that Christian Perfection was not a permanent state one attained that freed them from the trials, travails, or temptations of the world. "We cannot find any ground in scripture to suppose," he wrote in 1742, "that any inhabitant of an house of clay, is wholly exempt, either from bodily infirmities, or from ignorance...; or to imagine any is incapable of mistake, or of falling into divers temptations." By representing Scott's views of flawed humanity as contradicting Methodist teaching, Thomas Whittemore's implicit characterization of perfect sanctification as a form of utopianism is a mischaracterization of both Scott and Wesley.

judgment from God. This relied on the assumption that God treated all people the same, being that they were all his creation. When coupled with the belief that all humans had good and evil within them, it led Whittemore to a truly radical conclusion. And that conclusion was the uniformity of humanity because such sameness meant they had to be judged in an identical manner. "I reply," he wrote, "that according to your description of human character, it does not appear that there ought to be as much difference as is generally thought justice requires." He made this egalitarian theology even more explicit. "For if, as you say, and as is manifestly true," he wrote, "there is a mixture of good and evil in the characters of men, there is not so much difference between mankind as some have thought there was."[50] By effacing the distinction between saint and sinner, Whittemore championed an alternative to Scott's doctrine of present probation that made present judgment and universal salvation a possibility.

After outlining his view of God's love and his understanding of human nature, Whittemore presented the third premise behind his argument against present probation and future judgment. This pertained to Scott's view of human accountability. He disputed what he viewed as Scott's effort to conflate accountability and probation and claimed that he accepted the former but rejected the latter. Whittemore instead argued that things like accountability and judgment did not occur in "a future state." To him, accountability and judgment happened in the present world. Like Scott, Whittemore derived his evidence from the Bible. However, this created an intriguing juxtaposition between the two men. While Scott had overwhelmingly utilized the New Testament to buttress his claims of future judgment, Whittemore turned to many Old Testament figures to support his assertion that judgment occurred in the present.[51] In these Old Testament

[50] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 97.
[51] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott," 97-98. Whittemore placed greatest emphasis here on Old Testament figures Adam, Cain, and David before he mentioned Moses, Peter, and Paul.

sources, people were held to account in their own lifetimes. For Whittemore, it followed that accountability and probation were two distinct forces that could not be used interchangeably.

Linking this theological section with a scriptural section, Whittemore criticized what he considered to be Scott's ignorance about Universalism. This amounted to a lengthy paragraph that took up nearly one-seventh of the entire communication. Given the nature of the discourse prior to this portion in the article, it marked a rather abrupt turn both in tone and content. It underscored Whittemore's defensiveness towards any criticism of his denomination, something not entirely without merit. Universalists had certainly faced their share of harsh criticisms from rival denominations, and Whittemore's attack on Orange Scott served as a microcosm for that more general frustration. He illustrated this connection between Scott and general anti-Universalist sentiment by going back-and-forth on who he attacked in this paragraph. "You appear almost totally ignorant of what Universalists have written," he wrote of Scott, before transitioning only a few sentences later into a broader castigation of "our opponents" and a far more general "they." Later in the paragraph, he again did the exact same thing . After expressing frustration that Scott would not allow a church member to read Hosea Ballou's *Treatise on Atonement*, Whittemore shifted to expressing frustration with "you and your brethren." Whether or not these criticisms of Scott or other opponents of Universalism were fair, they marked a departure from the idea of a cordial debate that both sides had hoped for. Scott had exclusively focused his first communication on ideas, and what he considered to be errors in Universalist thinking. He did not attack Universalists. Whittemore, by contrast, had taken those criticisms of Universalism as a theology to be criticisms of Universalists as people. "You have within a few

months preached most vehemently against Universalists," Whittemore complained while making little effort to reconcile that charge with Scott's largely civil tone.[52]

Like Scott, Whittemore understood that their disagreement over biblical exegesis was a central point of contention. When Whittemore said that Scott did not sufficiently understand Universalism and its teachings, he also asserted that Scott did not "know the manner in which we interpret the scriptures."[53] Scott had highlighted that distinction in his first communication, and Whittemore's biblical analysis in the subsequent paragraphs only served to reinforce rather than refute Scott's claim about their differences.

Whittemore's discussion of the parable of the tares embodied this reality. Despite his prior claims that Scott remained wholly ignorant of Universalism or its arguments, he admitted that Scott's understanding of the Universalist interpretation of that parable was accurate. "This statement," he wrote, referencing Scott's view that Universalists generally interpreted the wheat and tares in the parable as truth and error, "is correct." Whittemore, however, explained that he held a different position from his fellow Universalists respecting that symbolism. While truth and falsehood could metaphorically correspond to "the children of the kingdom" and "the children of the wicked one," Whittemore said, "I have preferred not to adopt it." Instead, he said he believed "that the wheat represented the believers in Christ, and the tares the unbelieving Jews." This interpretation allowed Whittemore to skirt around the concept of a future harvest in the parable – which Jesus himself defined as "the end of the world" – and instead contend that the parable actually spoke of past and present judgment, not judgment in a future state of existence.[54] It also

[52] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 98.
[53] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 98.
[54] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 98. Matthew 13:40 (KJV).

allowed him to evade Scott’s critique that Universalists had detached the parable’s symbolism from people.

Whittemore’s subsequent counterargument at once undermined Scott’s contention that the Universalists had detached themselves from the Bible while simultaneously vindicating it. He displayed a strong command of the Bible itself, but the way in which he read it echoed Scott’s concerns. Both sides understood there to be metaphorical, allegorical, and symbolic dimensions to the Bible, but Scott held the position that there were fundamental facts, actual events, and absolute truths contained within its pages. In this sense, Whittemore’s parable of the tares was not a warning about the end of the world and the final judgment; it was an examination into past and present judgment. This explains why Whittemore highlighted the Jewish people as the tares. Citing several Old Testament verses, he reasoned that Egypt was the furnace of fire in the parable.[55] He then carried this interpretation further, stating that the act of the tares being thrown into the furnace was a past event, not a future one. According to Isaiah and Ezekiel, he wrote, the Jews in the Old Testament were among the “wicked men who were thrown into a furnace” that suffered “the fire of God’s wrath.” But these events were historical events, not something that was yet to come. “All this in this state of existence,” Whittemore concluded.[56]

Whittemore then grappled with the portion of the parable which stated that the owner would send his reapers to gather the tares and throw them into the furnace. When expounding on the meaning of the parable, Jesus had explained that this meant:

> The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them in the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.[57]

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[55] Whittemore, “Reply to Mr. Scott.,” 98. Whittemore cited Deuteronomy 4:20, 1 Kings 8:51, and Jeremiah 4:4, which all use the imagery of a furnace to describe Egypt.
[56] Whittemore, “Reply to Mr. Scott.,” 98.
[57] Matthew 13:41-42 (KJV).

Whittemore argued that this could not be a reference to actual angels because, as he asked Scott, "Have angels ever been in this world to accomplish this?" "The word angel," he continued, "frequently signifies a human messenger," and he then cited the Book of Revelation as well as theologian Adam Clarke to support this assertion.[58] Given Adam Clarke's ties to Methodism, Whittemore's invocation of him proved to be a powerful source of authority in a debate with Scott.

Whittemore's last point with respect to the parable of the tares pertained to Scott's argument that the end of the world pointed to a future event. At this juncture, Whittemore again turned to Adam Clarke, whom he described as "Your favorite commentator." Whittemore explained that he agreed with Clarke that the "end of the world" meant "the end of the Jewish polity." He drew further support from Hebrews 9:26 and 1 Corinthians 10:11 to buttress his claim about the end of the world not being a future event.[59] These passages, in Whittemore's reading, actually pointed to the end of the world as taking place in the past with "the sacrifice of Jesus Christ." Believing his argument victorious, Whittemore concluded with the boast, "If all your incontestable proof is like this, your doctrine stands on very precarious ground."[60]

This interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares is significant because it captures the diametrically opposing ways in which Orange Scott and Thomas Whittemore read and interpreted the Bible. Both sides, however, shared one thing in common. They each concurred that there was a degree of literal and symbolic truth behind the Bible. But when it came to deciding what was to be read as literally true and what was to be read as symbolically

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[58] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 98.

[59] It is important to note the exact wording of these passages. Hebrews 9:26 states that "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" while 1 Corinthians 10:11 states that "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

[60] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 98.

true is where the differences emerged. For Scott, the exact words of Jesus were literally true. Parables were symbolically true and similar episodes in the Bible could be read and left open to interpretation. However, for Scott, Jesus' words of what a parable meant were literal facts that could not be disputed or reinterpreted since the explanation came directly from the son of God. Whittemore, by contrast, used biblical exegesis to analyze Jesus' own statements in rather creative ways. In the case of this parable, that led Scott to accept it as absolute truth while Whittemore carried his allegorical reading to encompass even the words of Jesus himself.

In this respect, it is also important to note that Whittemore largely sidestepped Scott's argument about tenses in this portion of the debate, responding to it only at the very end of the second half of his essay. Jesus had used the phrase "shall" in the context of "end of the world," which challenged Whittemore's conclusion that it referred to purely historical events. Whittemore tried to counter this plain reading of the English by shifting the discussion to translation, specifically as it related to the Greek. Citing Adam Clarke's writings on Jude as well as Greville Ewing's lexicon on Greek grammar, Whittemore contended that Greek writers "occasionally" used tenses interchangeably.[61] The interchangeable nature of tenses, occasional though it may have been, did more than simply challenge Scott's argument. In Whittemore's view, it completely debunked it. "This fact," he proclaimed, "completely nullifies your argument and renders it entirely useless."[62]

The remainder of Thomas Whittemore's opening essay, which continued from the December 9 article to the December 16 one, carried forth many of these same patterns found in the discussion of the parable of the tares. Whittemore finished that December 9 portion of his

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[61] Thomas Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 16, 1826, vol. 8, no. 26, p. 103, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[62] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 103.

response to Scott with an analysis of the passage in John about literal and figurative resurrection. He then used the entirety of his December 16 article to delve into a detailed discussion of the remaining biblical passages that Scott used in his opening essay, specifically those from the Book of Revelation and the Gospel of Matthew. This crystalized many of the central themes of this debate, especially as it pertained to the ways in which both sides read the Bible. Whittemore dismissed Scott's more literalistic reading of Revelation's prophecies about the end of the world: "The book of Revelation is by far the most figurative of all the sacred books." The turn of the phrase Whittemore used is quite significant, and further highlights the difference between the two men. Whittemore did not merely say that Revelation should be read in a mostly figurative or metaphorical sense, he implied that all the books of the Bible were figurative to some degree or another with Revelation simply being the "most figurative" of them.[63]

Much of Whittemore's subsequent analysis of Revelation was predicated upon this assumption, and it simply dismissed the imagery of Revelation – the dragon and New Jerusalem, among others – as exclusively figurative. In essence, Whittemore's contention boiled down to a relatively simple argument once separated from his linguistic interpretation and symbolic analysis. Revelation was simply a metaphor that needed to be applied "to the concerns of this state" as opposed to being a prophecy about the eventual end of the world. Whittemore reasoned that all the events of Revelation took place "here upon the earth" and that it was simply an allegory. For Whittemore, this was incontestable fact. He did not seek to prove it. The question was not over whether Revelation was literal prophecy or metaphorical allegory, it was solely a question of analyzing the symbols in the book and then determining "whatever they mean."[64]

[63] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 101.
[64] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 101.

Whittemore employed similar logic in his criticism of Scott's interpretation of Matthew 10:15.[65] These passages, in Scott's account, likened the coming future judgment of humanity to Sodom and Gomorrah. Whittemore turned back to his previous arguments about the past and present, as well his contention in the parable of the tares that the tares had symbolized the Jewish people. This again underscored the fundamental distinction between Scott and Whittemore in how they read and analyzed the Bible, with the latter preferring to see hidden symbolism or historical events in those passages which the former interpreted more literally. At its most fundamental level, Whittemore's reasoning hinged upon his belief that the passages in question referred only to previous generations. "I understand him [Jesus]," Whittemore continued, "to mean that the punishment which those cities suffered [Sodom and Gomorrah] was more tolerable than the judgments which were impending over the enemies of Christ." And when Whittemore spoke of the enemies of Christ, he had a very specific group in mind. "The punishment of Sodom was more tolerable than that of the Jews," he declared. This led him to conclude that "a right interpretation of the scriptures" pointed not to "a day of judgment in the future state" but instead to "the day of judgment which came on the unbelieving Jews."[66] Whether or not this amounted to an anti-Semitic thread that ran through Whittemore's biblical exegesis, it nevertheless underscored his tendency to look at the Bible with a far more liberal perspective than Scott and to incorporate symbolism and phrases from across its many different books and authors.

Whittemore concluded the second half of his first essay by discussing this subject of biblical interpretation, and he directly responded to Scott's critique about how he read and

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[65] Matthew 10:15 (KJV) reads, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." Matthew 12:401-42 (KJV) declares, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

[66] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 103.

interpreted the Bible. For Scott, biblical passages were self-explanatory, and he furnished several with little commentary because he thought the meaning evident unto itself. He did not believe commentary to be necessary since the passages had what he saw as a clear, indisputable meaning. Whittemore, however, found that line of thought unconvincing. “You must shew that they [the scriptures] apply to a judgment in the future state,” he said, “or you do nothing at all.”[67] In making this criticism, however, Whittemore underscored the more subtle distinction between Scott’s torrent of Bible verses and his own subsequent objection to them. The dispute was over the correct way to interpret scripture, and Orange Scott had taken the side that placed emphasis on what he saw as the plain or obvious meaning of the text as it appeared in English. While not strictly fundamentalist, Scott treated biblical verses, especially Jesus’ own words, as actual divine truths rather than part of a symbolic tapestry.

Whittemore himself understood this distinction. His flexible interpretation of the wheat and tares as Christians and Jews, which he proclaimed to be the “right interpretation of scriptures,” echoed his belief that the appropriate form of biblical exegesis was that which looked for hidden, often symbolic, meaning behind the actual words. This also meant supplementing biblical verses with other symbols and phrases found elsewhere in the Bible. To him, this all entailed more than simply reading the Bible and interpreting its meaning from the text alone. “Reason and scripture,” he wrote near the very end of the communication, before clarifying that he meant “scripture rightly understood,” was “the umpire in the matter between us.”[68]

Whittemore ended his first article confident that he had produced the superior argument and utterly defeated Scott. If his interpretative framework of the Bible carried the day, that was

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[67] Whittemore, “Reply to Mr. Scott.,” 103.
[68] Whittemore, “Reply to Mr. Scott.,” 103.

certainly the case. His condescension, however, became increasingly apparent as the essay neared its conclusion. He even told Scott that he could go receive assistance from other Methodist ministers to help him write his next essays if he so wished. However, Whittemore's scathing criticism and extreme confidence in his own arguments should not obscure his relatively amicable closing. Noting that he appreciated the tone of Orange Scott's opening statement, Whittemore ended by saying that he hoped this "spirit" would be "preserved" in all subsequent communications.[69] At certain junctures, Whittemore may have been the greater offender of that spirit of magnanimous debate, but his overall analysis of the tone was largely correct, with both sides more-or-less eschewing personal insults and remaining focused on ideas. Given the opposing nature of their worldviews and interpretive frameworks, neither side truly claimed victory over the other in the opening articles. Nevertheless, these essays clearly demonstrated the feasibility of a candid and largely respectful debate between rival denominations and the ways in which the newspaper could serve as a vehicle for such discourse.

Two weeks later, on December 30, 1826, the *Universalist Magazine* published Orange Scott's second communication. If his original article read like a religious sermon at points, this one instead adopted a far more philosophical approach to the differences between Universalism and Methodism. Rather than engage with Whittemore's rebuttal, Scott instead articulated his own position on future judgment. Despite Whittemore's counterarguments, Scott was satisfied with his opening essay. Given that he believed his biblical verses spoke for themselves, it made sense why he felt further discussion on his part to be unnecessary. The opening of his second article began with the declaration that he had "proved ... the doctrine of a *Future Judgment*."[70]

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[69] Whittemore, "Reply to Mr. Scott.," 103.
[70] O. Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," *Universalist Magazine*, December 30, 1826, vol. 8, no. 28, p. 109, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

Whereas the first communication dealt with the subject of future judgment and whether or not it was a biblical doctrine, the second essay instead covered the "why" part of that question. More specifically, it addressed *why* future judgment – particularly the punishment of the wicked – was both a necessary and a moral doctrine.

This question of future punishment shared a natural link with the concept of future judgment, so this communication served as a logical continuation of the first essay. The second article also built on many of the concepts which Scott had briefly introduced in his opening remarks. It presented the philosophical and theological case against the dimensions of Whittemore's theology that could best be identified as a form of nascent prosperity theology. In addition, Scott's opposition to the doctrine of universal salvation, while deeply grounded in a more literal reading of the Bible and a more conservative theology, also came from his belief in justice. This concern for justice, which was itself derived from his theological worldview, provides the historian with keen insight into many of the attitudes that became the foundation for his subsequent support for reform. A desire to vindicate a traditional Christian theology, coupled with this belief in justice, served as the cornerstone to his opposition to Universalism.

Scott fundamentally objected to Whittemore's view of a nascent prosperity theology because he feared that it linked salvation with the worldly well-being of humans. He did not have to construct a strawman argument to arrive at this position. Even though Scott believed it to be the logical conclusion to Universalism, Whittemore himself had been the one to introduce the connection in his first essay. This undercurrent of a fledgling prosperity theology could be found in the parable of the wheat and tares and Whittemore's suggestion that the tares were the "unbelieving Jews." When one examines the logic of this position, Scott's subsequent argument becomes far clearer. Whittemore believed that no future judgment existed but, operating upon a

shared premise with Scott that God was just and that judgment for evil therefore had to exist in some form, the only opportunity would be in the past or the present. God's judgment, then, could only occur in this world and would inevitably take on worldly characteristics. In the case of the parable of the tares, the historical Jews, having defied God in the Old Testament, received their punishments in the present world. As such, the calamities which befell them in their lifetimes were the result of their own sinfulness.

For Whittemore's position to be consistent, as outlined in the parable of the tares, it needed to be applied on an even larger scale. The good were to be rewarded in this life, and the wicked were to receive punishments for their actions in the present world. And that is exactly the point on which Scott posited future judgment as a necessary component of God's justice. "You admit that the wicked shall be punished *according* to the desert of their sins," he began, reasoning that if Whittemore denied "all punishment in the future state" then the only logical alternative was that "you hold that sinners shall be punished ... in this life." If sin was "a crime" that "cannot receive its full desert of punishment in this [world]," then it stood to reason that the future state was the only place where this judgment could occur.[71]

The two pillars of Scott's argument – his opposition to Whittemore's perceived doctrine of worldly prosperity and his own belief in God's justice – remained intertwined throughout the course of the second essay. This is because universal salvation made his own conception of divine justice impossible. In response to Whittemore's brand of Universalism, he developed an argument that introduced four major points that linked both pillars of this argument together.

The first of these components pertained to the nature of punishment and the very purpose of justice itself. In this respect, Scott argued that punishment could occur in only two senses:

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[71] Scott, "Controversial.," 109.

either as the “mere effect of sin” or as “the award of justice.” This first sense, the effect of sin, meant that a person who committed some act experienced a logical reaction. These consequences were a natural result of a particular action. One of the examples that Scott cited was the person who got drunk and subsequently fell into a mire and got their clothes dirty. While Scott conceded that such punishment could occur in the world, it often did not go far enough. To define punishment in such a way limited the scope of justice to a mere cause and effect process. Scott instead argued that punishment was also the award of justice and entailed the procedure by which a person was held accountable by the law. If a person committed theft or fraud, they would be sentenced to prison. It required an external force to be effective. This differed from the former sense of punishment because it was not a natural outcome and was instead “the result of legal process.”[72] Punishment for evil actions, then, was the fullest and most complete manifestation of justice whether done in the present or the future.

This dichotomy between effect of sin and award of justice is essential to understanding Scott’s conception of justice itself. True justice, he contended, needed to go beyond what he termed “the philosophical sense” and occupy what he called “the judicial sense.” Such a legal framework might have existed in the present world, but Scott clarified that true justice could occur only when “taking place under divine law.”[73] This understanding of divine law, the higher law of God, is essential to understand not only Orange Scott’s opposition to Universalism but his entire worldview. His belief that there existed a law above all human legal systems explained why he felt true justice could never be attained in the present. This further underscored his view that human law often fell short of adhering to the principles of divine law. Since humans had free will, their legal structures paled in contrast with God’s and could never embody true justice.

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[72] Scott, “Controversial.,” 109.
[73] Scott, “Controversial.,” 109.

They could only echo it. Accepting the reality that human law did not serve as a perfect manifestation of justice eventually compelled him to challenge human law out of a desire to make it better conform to divine law.

After outlining the meaning of justice, Scott articulated his belief in the purpose of punishment. In this sense, punishment had a twofold nature: it could be either "disciplinary" or "capital." The former type of punishment was the "smaller" of the two and treated offenses with a lighter hand because it was intended to lead to "the reformation of the subjects." Disciplinary justice, Scott explained, would include the case where a drunkard was sent to a house of correction. These cases were intended "to promote the reformation of those who suffer them." The second form, however, was far more severe. Capital justice was not done to change a person's behavior but to hold that person accountable for their transgressions. This existed on a divine scale, but Scott conceded that it was also "recognized by all well regulated governments."[74] His vision of justice meant that every punishment was tailored to the type of offense to which it belonged.

While disciplinary punishments certainly existed as part of Scott's view of God's overarching justice, he differed with Whittemore by pushing the boundaries of this argument further to conclude that such punishments could not be the "greatest punishments inflicted by divine law." If disciplinary justice were the sole extent of God's justice, then Scott determined that God would damn his own creatures for their own good, to be "cast into outer darkness to illuminate them." At this juncture, Scott did not directly take aim at Whittemore's argument but instead outlined what he viewed as the incompatibility of his own belief in future punishment with Whittemore's earlier argument that God would act only for the absolute welfare of all

[74] Scott, "Controversial.," 109.

creation. The idea of damnation for one's own good, he suggested, was "the legitimate consequence of that doctrine which teaches that reformation is the end of all punishment."[75]

This became the fundamental and defining component – the recurring thread – to Scott's entire argument over the course of his several communications in the *Universalist Magazine*. While this discussion began and continued to be deeply theological by its very nature, Scott took a compelling interest in what he viewed as the real-world and philosophical implications of Universalism. This hinged primarily upon his conception of justice in human society. His objection to Universalism stemmed from his belief that it promoted the same societal injustices many of its adherents purportedly opposed. If all humans were saved regardless of their deeds, it stood to reason that the slaveholders and tyrants he mentioned in his first essay enjoyed the same salvation that their victims did. And if Whittemore's conception of present punishment were true, then it stood to reason that the prosperous were blessed by God while the suffering, the sick, and the impoverished were sinners facing their punishment.

Scott declared that the entire debate between Whittemore and himself rested upon "whether sin receives its full desert of punishment in this life." "You affirm that they [sins] do," he wrote, adding that Whittemore was incorrect because "wicked men often prosper." This, he proclaimed, was the central point of contention. And the burden of proof lay solely with his opponent. Whittemore needed to prove that "all men" suffered in some material way. "If there is one [wicked person] who does not thus suffer," Scott wrote, "your argument falls to the ground and universal salvation is found to be a deadly error." Although he cited Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Jeremiah to demonstrate this point, Scott's use of Job proved the most illustrative. Since the people of Job's time viewed justice in purely materialistic terms, they viewed the ill fortune that

[75] Scott, "Controversial.," 109.

befell him as proof that "he was a wicked man." To Scott, the entire point of the Book of Job, regardless of whether it was a literal history or "an allegory," was to teach "that the righteous are often in affliction, while the wicked prosper." Scott then asked Whittemore, "do you not perceive that you have placed yourself in the same situation with Job's friends?"[76]

Scott's second essay did not limit this argument about the insufficiency of temporal justice of the wicked to merely materialistic considerations. Since humans were also spiritual beings bestowed with "a conscience," Scott realized that it was also important to illustrate that the wicked could avoid unseen punishments as well. Therefore, he contended that they could be immune to the moral chastisement of their own consciences. Some evildoers may have faced "great terror and remorse" for their misdeeds, but "in no instance … does all they suffer from conscience amount to the full desert of the sins." Citing St. Paul, Scott also raised the specter of those individuals who lived in "a state of depravity and wickedness," whose "consciences through the excess of wickedness have become like cauterized flesh, seared with a hot iron and *past feeling*." These individuals had no guilt or remorse for their actions and were therefore untroubled by their misdeeds. This view of the fragility of conscience, its liability to go "extinct" in the face of "habitual" vice, was a fact that had been "lamented by good men in every age." Even Whittemore and the Universalists, Scott concluded, would also accept that eternal truth were they not "obscured" by "the love of system (pardon the offensiveness of the expression)."[77]

At this juncture it is important to note that Scott's critique of Universalism did not confine itself to being strictly conservative in a theological sense; it straddled into political conservatism as well. This was a conservatism akin to that of an Edmund Burke that prioritized the juxtaposition of the traditional, the institutional, and the pragmatic with untested chimerical

[76] Scott, "Controversial.," 109.
[77] Scott, "Controversial.," 109-110.

theories and rigid rationalistic frameworks.[78] Scott made this Burkean appeal apparent in his second essay when he suggested that Universalists had been "blinded by love of theory."[79] The choice of the words "theory" and "system" to characterize this attachment to universal salvation is deeply illustrative of Scott's state of mind when writing these essays. It demonstrates that he viewed Universalism as more than just a simple theological position on salvation. Were that the case, it would have been a largely unassuming theological disagreement between two rival denominations. His tone, however, highlighted that he saw Universalism as a broader radical movement with a theological bent. In that sense, by his second essay, Scott was no longer simply defending the traditional way one should read the Bible and interpret it. He was also vindicating traditional society and its very conception of justice from a radicalism that threatened to eradicate it.

To christen this shift towards an even more practical foundation, Scott turned from the scriptural and the metaphysical to more tangible examples: offering the case of the unrepentant murderer and the case of the conquering despot. He offered both these "supposable" scenarios – ones which "You cannot say that history furnishes no examples" – to highlight the instances where the wicked could escape punishment for their crimes and even profit from their evil

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[78] Edmund Burke, although a conservative thinker, accepted not only the inevitability of change but that change could yield positive results for society. However, he distinguished between change as "reform" and change as "innovation," supporting the former and condemning the latter. Reform was fundamentally rooted in pragmatism and experience, and it built upon institutions and traditions with designs to improve them and rectify their deficiencies. By contrast, innovative change was rooted in what Burke often considered "theory," or the idea of taking untested theoretical ways that the world should work and imposing them on society. This generally entailed removing the institutions or traditions in society that stood in the way of the perfect order, whether they be the monarchy, the church, or culture. This type of change was embraced by individuals who believed they could transcend human limitations and order the world according to their vision. In Burke's view, they were individuals who looked at the world as they wanted it to be rather than the world as it existed. By invoking the word "theory" to characterize Whittemore's Universalism, Orange Scott not only echoed the language of Burke; he also also echoed the fundamental ideals behind that word and suggested that Whittemore sought to upend hundreds of years of Christian teaching on salvation to better align with his personal values and worldview. See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

[79] Scott, "Controversial.," 110.

actions. In the case of the unrepentant murderer, Scott described him as a robber who committed a murder and suffered a guilty conscience for a brief time. But after going “unsuspected” and desiring more material goods, he killed again. Discovering that he felt “less remorse than before” he continued until he had murdered ten people. He then spent the rest of his life at ease, dying comfortably at the age of seventy. This man was, in Scott’s telling, not one who “suffers in this life, according to his deeds.”[80]

Even if the murderer had suffered in life, had he been executed for the crime of murder, Scott argued that the sentence would be insufficient because it would not have been proportional to the crimes. The death sentence, Scott argued, could only justly cover one murder since the murderer had “forfeit[ed] his life” after killing the first victim. “Still there remain nine [murders] for which he makes no satisfaction,” he wrote, noting that “the law of society,” even in its ideal state, could not fully realize justice in that case. Moreover, “divine law,” in addition to human laws, “recognize[s] him as a rebel and demand[s] satisfaction.”[81] Complete justice, Scott concluded, could therefore only occur in a “future condemnation” since the present condemnation of human society could not fully resolve or redress the scope of the murderer’s crimes. Moreover, it further highlights Scott’s belief in a clear distinction between human law and divine law and the notion that humans were accountable to both.

In the second hypothetical case, Scott presented a proud and ambitious despot. Describing this conqueror, he wrote:

> He goes forth trampling upon all law human and divine; he violates treaties, disregards justice, burns cities, ravages kingdoms, while destruction and misery every where mark his way; he makes indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children; wantons in the miseries of his fellow creatures; sacrifices many ten thousands of his own subjects, and

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[80] Scott, “Controversial.,” 110.
[81] Scott, “Controversial.,” 110.

> makes widows and fatherless children without number. Finally he returns victorious with the spoils of nations, and leaves kingdoms to his heirs.[82]

In the face of this grim portrait and "probable" scenario where the despot enjoyed a prosperous life, Scott asked Thomas Whittemore to consider "whether it is possible for him to suffer in this life, all that his crimes deserve!" "To affirm this," Scott averred, "would be to mock the understanding of all mankind. It would be to deny a universal sentiment." He then proclaimed it was the logical conclusion of those instances where "the human intellect may be darkened, and the judgement warped, by the love of theory."[83]

This conservative counterargument deliberately sought to juxtapose Whittemore's radicalism and his alleged attachment to "theory" with the real-world implications of his doctrines. "Lay your theory aside for a moment," Scott urged Whittemore, "to look this subject full in the face." This meant going beyond scriptural exegesis and into abstract discussion. He not only wanted evidence from "scripture" and "reason," but also from "our best observation" and "our senses," thereby broadening the discussion to go beyond faith and reason and into the realm of how the ideas they were discussing impacted ordinary people. His example of the despot, in all his cruelty and malice, was meant to be so excessive as to force one to consider his victims and whether they deserved the justice that worldly circumstances had denied them. By contrast, he turned to the opposite example, asking, "Do not the righteous, according to your doctrine, suffer more than they deserve?" For Scott, the logical end of a "doctrine" which taught that individuals "receiv[e] their reward in this life" was obvious: "had we not better dispense with righteousness and take our pleasure?"[84]

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[82] Scott, "Controversial.," 110.
[83] Scott, "Controversial.," 110.
[84] Scott, "Controversial.," 110-111.

The final paragraph of Scott's second essay and his concluding postscript dealt with a completely unrelated but recurring part of the debate between himself and Whittemore: the debate about the parameters of the debate. After informing readers that he ended his article only for "want of room in your Magazine," Scott declared, "It is desirable that the present discussion be carried on with *fairness* on both sides." In particular, he took issue with the criticism that he had directly attacked Universalism prior to the ongoing debate with Whittemore, noting that the sermon which had produced the controversy was "really in support of the doctrine of future judgment … and not *directly* against 'Universal Salvation.'" This subtle distinction was significant for Scott, since it underscored his emphasis on the overarching ideas at stake rather than the personalities espousing them. He concluded by praising Whittemore and the *Universalist Magazine* for their "liberality" in allowing him to use the two pages that he had requested, but then observed that "two pages of a quarto sheet is small room to treat any one of the great points in discussion between us."[85] Although he did not explicitly ask of it, this assertion, when coupled with his own admission that his second essay had exceeded the page limit, suggested to the reader that he hoped for more space than the six two-page essays that he and Whittemore agreed to at the onset of the debate.

Whittemore addressed this debate over the debate the following week, on January 6, 1827. Taking offense at Scott's use of what he called "opprobrious epithets" – specifically his phrase "love of system" – Whittemore compared Scott to the Catholic Pope. Nevertheless, he said he had little intention to dwell on it, and instead turned his focus to what he saw as the larger issue: the fact that Orange Scott had not directly replied to his first essay. He complained, "Am I not justified … [that] you are determined that nothing shall have any effect upon on your mind?"

[85] O. Scott, "Controversial.," 111.

This reveals an important distinction between the ways that both men envisioned the debate. Whittemore, on one hand, believed it ought to be a back-and-forth in which each side replied to the other's arguments from the following week. His "intention" had been for them both to "sit down" and "candidly to weigh the evidences offered." Scott had not done that, instead opting to discuss different but interconnected topics that gradually built a complete argument. Whittemore interpreted Scott's movement from future judgment in his first essay to the nature of divine justice and punishment in his second essay as an insult. It was not the point-by-point rebuttal he had envisioned. "I supposed that you would drop the character of the sectarian," he wrote, adding that he must have been "under a mistake" that Scott could do so. He then announced his intention to direct his words to "the intelligent reader" rather than Scott.[86]

After this opening, the remainder of Whittemore's second essay – again written over the course of two weeks for approximately double the space Orange Scott had received – challenged Scott's December 30 article. He particularly criticized Scott's shift from a scriptural argument in the first essay to a more philosophical and practical one in the second. "You have entirely changed the ground of your argument," Whittemore observed before asking, "Why … abandon the good ground, leap over the Scriptures, and make them of secondary considerations?" For Whittemore, the "principal object" between the two men was the question, "*Do the scriptures teach the doctrine of future retribution*?" That Scott had included other dimensions into his argument beyond the Bible was simply "a tacit acknowledgement that you are convinced that the Bible is not so clear in favor of a future judgment."[87]

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[86] Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial. Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," *Universalist Magazine*, January 6, 1827, vol. 8, no. 29, p. 113, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[87] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 113.

Whittemore began with a curt dismissal of Scott's distinction between "effect of sin" and "award of justice," noting that those concepts were not philosophical ideas about justice but instead "your own assumption." He then concluded that Scott was actually contending that divine punishment "cannot be inflicted in this state of existence." Scott, however, had not made that argument; he had held that *some* – not all – sinners could escape punishment. Nevertheless, this raises an important point about the scope of their debate. Both men believed the burden of proof rested on the other. As seen, Scott had said he merely needed to find one wicked person who prospered to disprove Whittemore, and Whittemore confidently cited Cain in his second essay as proof that Scott's entire argument about divine justice was wrong. He turned to Lamentations 14:6,22, Zechariah 14:18-19, and St. Peter to show more instances where the Bible invoked a punishment that had already taken place or would take place in the temporal world. These scriptural passages were all false, Whittemore concluded, "if God does not punish men in this life for disobedience to his laws."[88]

The idea that God's justice was limited exclusively to the present, physical world remained the entire cornerstone of Whittemore's overarching argument. With Scripture and the law that "revelation discloses" in hand, he proclaimed, "earthly rulers are sent by God for the punishment of evil doers and the praise of them that do well." Again, as shown previously, Whittemore was caught between a traditional understanding of God and his own radical theology. He agreed with Scott that God was just, and that God would not allow the wicked to prosper but had rejected the idea that punishment could be inflicted in the future state. This forced him to occupy the position that it was exclusively through the temporal "instrumentality"

[88] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 113.

that God would "recompence mankind."[89] This theme will continue to be explored in this chapter and the next, as Whittemore was increasingly forced to reaffirm these positions.

This singular focus on present justice inevitably brought another issue to the foreground: the notion of free will. Even when relegated to the background, its presence could still be felt in how both Scott and Whittemore conversed about theology. In his first two essays, and particularly in his second, Scott had articulated a world that took free will into account and grappled with the dilemma of how God could truly be just in a world in which humans were free to choose good or evil. As Scott had noted, sometimes the evil action was the profitable one and sometimes a righteous act led to suffering. His world was infinitely complex and, in its fallen state, could not properly or fully realize justice.

Whittemore envisioned an entirely different world; one devoid of free will. Turning his attention to capital punishment and arguing that the death penalty was unnecessary in a world in which criminal reformation existed, he asked, "has God not the power which human governments want to reform his creatures, create them anew and make them holy?" While this statement on its own was not necessarily controversial, it became far more radical when coupled with Whittemore's Universalism. God not only *had* the power to save the most wicked and evil people; he *would* save them. Whittemore continued: "I cannot describe the surprise I feel when I find a man contending that Almighty God, the giver of every blessing, punishes his creatures without designing their good." For God to desire every person's salvation and then to refuse to save them would make him imperfect because he would have failed to accomplish something he set out to do. This logic rested on the supposition that salvation was exclusively the work and accomplishment of God, and completely detached from human agency. As Whittemore put it in

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[89] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 113.

the second part of his second essay, “I know of no salvation but by grace.” Because God was infallible and could “never err” that meant grace was an absolute gift, which “we can neither purchase, nor forfeit.”[90] Human actions, their noble deeds or the grievous sins, had no bearing on their salvation. In Whittemore’s world, all humans received the gift of salvation whether they wanted it or not.

Whittemore carried this same worldview into his analysis of Scott’s contention that evil was insufficiently punished in this life. Terming that notion “the strong hold of Arminianism,” he targeted both the scriptural basis and the hypothetical examples that Scott had used. In particular, Whittemore explored Scott’s use of Ecclesiastes, Job, and Jeremiah, but his scriptural exegesis of Job is the most illustrative to examine his theological framework in contrast with Scott’s. Whittemore took particular issue with Scott’s use of Job and accused Scott of using the example “to excite public odium against me.” If he was one of Job’s friends, he declared that Scott was “classed with Jews, Mahomedans, or Pagans” because they also believed in future retribution.[91] Turning his attention from personality back to subject, Whittemore maintained that there was “no evidence” that Job believed in future retribution. Citing Job 19:29 and the phrase “punishments of the sword,” he reasoned that this phrase suggested a present punishment.[92] Moreover, Job did not explicitly say he believed in a future retribution. “If Job believed in a future retribution,” Whittemore asked, “why did he not say so?” And when Job said “the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him” in reference to the wicked, Whittemore interpreted that phrase to suggest present suffering rather than any judgement in the future.[93]

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[90] Whittemore, “Controversial.,” 113-114. Thomas Whittemore, “Controversial.,” *Universalist Magazine*, January 13, 1827, vol. 8, no. 30, p. 119, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[91] Thomas Whittemore, “Controversial.,” *Universalist Magazine*, January 6, 1827, vol. 8, no. 29, p. 114, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[92] Job 19:29, KJV. “Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgement.
[93] Whittemore, “Controversial.,” 114-115.

This biblical exegesis offers a fascinating glimpse into not only Whittemore's method for interpreting the Bible but also that of Orange Scott. It serves as an example in which both men inverted their usual approaches. Scott had read the Book of Job in a more metaphorical and philosophical sense, and the imagery of swords and valleys were symbolic to him. By contrast, Whittemore, despite his emphasis on reading the Bible in a less literal way, proceeded to do exactly that when it came to Job. Since Job did not explicitly mention a future judgment, one could not say that doctrine was scriptural. Since swords were human instruments and valleys were physical objects in the real world, then it was clear to him that Job spoke literally of the present world rather than a world to come. The real dispute between the two men, then, was the question of *when* rather than *how*. It was a matter of determining the appropriate time to read the Bible literally and when to read it metaphorically.

During an analysis of David and Psalm 73, Whittemore offered further context to his belief in present retribution and individual prosperity. Much of Scott's second essay had hinged upon the supposition that the wicked often prospered and the righteous suffered. Certain key premises of Whittemore's argument–that God was just but God could only punish the wicked in the present world–reflected that reality. Whittemore needed to disprove Scott's seemingly self-evident supposition that many evil people enjoyed prosperity. His rejoinder relied on Psalm 73 as an example. While many wicked people "were high," they nevertheless were "on 'slippery places,' and that even their prosperity was destruction."[94] This interpretation served as the foundation for Whittemore's subsequent counterargument.

He continued this same line of thought in the second part of his second essay, published the following week on January 13, 1827. There he took more direct aim at Scott's assertions

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[94] Whittemore, "Controversial. Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 115.

about prosperous villainy and righteous suffering. “Such a doctrine is hostile not only to experience, but to the general sense of the sacred writings,” he declared. He opened this section with a salvo of over thirty Bible verses, passages, and events to challenge Scott’s claims. Although Scott had asserted that he needed only one example of a prosperous villain to win, Whittemore offered a capable rejoinder. These passages operated from the Psalm 73 “slippery places” premise, as Whittemore reasoned that evil could only offer momentary pleasure or prosperity. Citing Proverbs 1:32 and Psalm 9:16, he argued that “the wicked prosper for a short time” and that they are “permitted to succeed for a moment.” This revolved around what he considered “the consequences of their [the wicked’s] sins” since their actions always resulted in an eventual punishment in the present world. Here Whittemore operated from the assumption that “Sin itself is punishment, as disease itself is pain.”[95] As a result, this present punishment did not necessarily have to even take a materialistic form and could manifest in other external or internal ways. But Whittemore’s view was still, as Scott argued, divine justice meted out in the present world. And it still looked at punishment as a largely simple cause-and-effect process.

This punishment could take two forms. First, there was the more obvious and materialistic type such as when “God overthrew [Israel’s] city by the hands of the Romans.” Similarly, Adam, Eve, and Cain did not have “easy” lives. But their suffering also echoed the second form of punishment: that which was more internalized and invisible. Sinners not only faced physical hardships but also struggled with “guilt, jealousy, envy and moroseness.” This also extended to those wicked individuals who superficially appeared to be doing well. For Whittemore, it was ultimately “a curse” for one “to depart from the true faith, being seduced to the doctrines of the devil.” Conversely, even if the righteous suffered, they had received

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[95] Thomas Whittemore, “Controversial. Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott,” *Universalist Magazine*, January 13, 1827, vol. 8, no. 30, p. 117-118, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

blessings that could not be quantified. Using the early Christians as an example, he replied that the Gospel had helped "deliver them" from their "deplorable situation." As a result, their material suffering paled in comparison with the spiritual blessings that they had received. It was, as Whittemore put it, "a happy exchange to part with the honors, riches, and praises of the world to gain Christ and his religion." Furthermore, to link faith in God and righteous living with "some extraneous reward" only served to cheapen those things.[96] Whittemore, then, used his second reply to expand the scope of the present judgment to include not only the material but the immaterial as well.

However, Whittemore carried this argument further when he engaged Scott's two hypothetical examples of the murderer and the despot. Rather than confront Scott's argument directly, Whittemore first dismissed it. "It is a common practice for people," he crowed, "when in every attempt they fail to support their doctrine … to describe some very wicked character." Alluding to Romans 1:29-31, Whittemore concluded that sinners had been cursed by God with "a reprobate mind as punishment." In essence, Whittemore's reasoning held that evil deeds themselves were the punishment for wickedness. This "abyss of depravity" as Whittemore put it was enough to counter any "imaginary case" that Scott supplied.[97]

The fundamental implication of this line of reasoning, however, was that those same people cursed to live in depravity also received the same salvation as the righteous. As a result, salvation, and the suffering that it entailed, was not a reward for the virtuous but something that the noble and the evil received. While Whittemore had tried to suggest that the realization of salvation should be its own reward, he also sought to attack the Methodist views of salvation using Scott's two examples of the murderer and the despot. In part, Whittemore complained:

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[96] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 117-118.
[97] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 118.

> Now I will venture to affirm, that if these two men, with all their sins, were put into your hands, you would find no manner of difficulty in getting them into heaven. Just let either of them profess to be converted according to the fashion of conversion in your church, and if, like the Pope, you did not give him a passport to heaven, you would at least express it as your opinion that he would go there. No sinner is so vile he may not go to heaven in this way without any future punishment whatsoever. Ministers of your order have encouraged people upon the gallows, who had been convicted of theft, piracy and murder, that they would go immediately into heaven. ... Now if it be, as you contend, impossible for such people to receive their punishment in this life, your doctrine admits them into heaven without being punished at all.[98]

Although Whittemore's strawman mischaracterized the theology of not only Methodists, but also many Protestants and Catholics, his statement reveals how he fundamentally differed from Scott regarding salvation and the punishment of sin. He felt that Scott supported a means for the wicked to escape punishment "either here or hereafter." While Whittemore may have simply sought to illustrate Scott's seeming inconsistency and hypocrisy, the fact that he featured this argument so prominently suggests that he genuinely believed it. [99] By cynically dismissing all deathbed confessions as nothing more than a free "passport" into heaven, Whittemore displayed a stunning lack of understanding of the concept of contrition. In traditional Christian teaching, sins could only be forgiven when a person had a contrite heart. Nevertheless, Whittemore continued with this line of argumentation as he concluded his second essay by claiming that Scott had trivialized sin because Methodism offered no "inducements" to "make them [people] virtuous." Sinners, he complained, "can save themselves from [future punishment] at any moment in life by repentance." With these premises established, Whittemore concluded that Methodism discouraged virtue and promoted vice. "The doctrine of the non-punishment of sin in this life is very licentious," he proclaimed of Scott's doctrine of future punishment.[100]

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[98] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 118.
[99] Whittemore discussed the two examples of murderer and despot in the middle of his January 13 essay, only to return to the concept of deathbed confessions in the final page. This would also be a recurring point in later essays.
[100] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 118-119.

Whittemore again chose to end his final paragraphs with a confident proclamation of victory. Although he suggested a "new and interesting" discussion between them on their differing ways of interpreting the Bible, this proposal represented as much of a belief that he had already bested Scott as it did a desire to chart a new course for their discussion. When Scott had ended his essay suggesting that the newspaper provide him with more space so he could furnish "direct proof" for his argument, Whittemore proclaimed that it was an admission that "you believe you have not furnished any 'direct proof.'" And the final sentence of the essay was a quote from a correspondent who said he "felt sorry" for Orange Scott.[101]

The first two sets of essays in the Scott-Whittemore controversy established the foundation for what followed. These discussions about abstract and often arcane questions dealt with the spiritual, the metaphysical, and the theoretical. At their core, these discussions remained deeply connected with concerns for the present world. Orange Scott forced this connection to be a part of the debate because he saw no sharp demarcation between faith and works. Although his theology was less academic than Whittemore's, his religious worldview stressed simplicity and pragmatism. The world was not fair or just, because people were susceptible to doing evil and they had the freedom to do so. For Scott, that meant true justice could never be fully realized in the present world. He was, therefore, distinctly opposed to utopian dreams even as he sought to promote religion and inculcate a more virtuous and just society. But by rejecting a future punishment while still believing God was just, Whittemore had been forced to argue that the present world embodied true justice. This disagreement, although inherently scriptural and theological, was also fundamentally philosophical and temporal by its very nature. Where Whittemore looked at people as they *could be* and saw religion through that lens, Scott saw

[101] Whittemore, "Controversial. 119.

people as they *were* and promoted religious doctrines to address the reality of a corrupted and fallen world. The chapter that follows explores these same themes as Scott and Whittemore continued to develop and refine their theological arguments.

Chapter 3: Orange Scott vs. Thomas Whittemore, Part II

The remaining series of essays in the *Universalist Magazine* built upon the foundation established in the first two pairs of articles. These writings increasingly crystallized the distinctions between Orange Scott and Thomas Whittemore on theological dogma, biblical exegesis, and the best way to promote morality in society. This chapter continues the debate to its conclusion and analyzes the ways its content reflected the two men's competing worldviews. These essays reveal that the controversy stemmed from fundamental disagreements over free will and the nature of human freedom in the cosmic order. Scott, in particular, realized this distinction between them and incorporated these considerations into his argument. Although these questions were deeply religious by their very nature, they were not exclusively the domain of theology. During this phase of the discussion, Scott increasingly made the religious into the societal because divine justice could not be separated from public morality. While Whittemore viewed this consideration as mere evasion, Scott saw promoting moral good and determining the means to best effectuate it as the central purpose of the entire discussion. Their debate was not one between two people or even two rival denominations; it was a clash between two fundamentally different worldviews. Scott saw the debate through that lens: it was a conflict of visions, not personalities.

Scott's third essay came on January 27, 1827, two weeks after Whittemore's second. Like Whittemore, Scott began his communication with a continuation of the debate over the debate before delving into the actual debate itself. In doing so, however, Scott crystalized one of the emerging problems about their discussion over Universalism: that both men conceived of the nature and character of their debate in radically differing ways. Whittemore had established in his second essay that he viewed the debate as an organic back-and-forth in which they responded

to the material presented in earlier essays. By contrast, Scott viewed the debate in the *Universalist Magazine* as one in which they would present their best case and let the audience judge. Explaining his reasoning, Scott noted:

> Having but six communications to make, and only two pages of the Magazine for each, and the choice of subjects being left wholly to myself, I fixed on a subject for each communication (and each would require a volume to treat it fully) and concluded, if it should appear necessary, to review the correspondence in my last. As I wrote with a view to the public good, it appeared most fair and honorable to submit the arguments on both sides to the decision of the candid. … I thought it of more importance to give these, with some of the principal arguments in support of them, and leave them for their considerations, than to go into answers and rejoinders. This course is apt to perplex common readers, and besides, is often influenced more by personal considerations than a regard to the edification of the public. In this way an important discussion often degenerates into personalities and invectives, and the disputants disgrace themselves, if not the subject in debate, before the public.[1]

This reinforces the nature of Scott's first two essays, in which he focused his criticism primarily upon Whittemore's ideas rather than Whittemore himself. The third communication, however, initially represented a marked shift towards the latter.

Although he announced his intention for "adhering to my original plan," Scott nevertheless criticized Whittemore's conduct up to that point in the debate. "You have unhappily adopted the *declamatory* style and manner of writing," he noted, asserting that such an approach was "ill adapted" to their discussion because "The very design of a *discussion*, and above all of a *theological* discussion rejects this method, and requires that subjects be examined *closely*, defined *accurately*, and proved *logically*." "Not one of these characters appears in your replies," Scott declared, "but you every where abound in evasion, assumption, illogical deduction and declamation." He asserted that page limitations forced him to choose between adhering to his

[1] O. Scott, "Controversial.," *Universalist Magazine*, January 27, 1827, vol. 8, no. 32, p. 125, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

"original plan" for the articles and engaging with Whittemore's "sophistry" because doing both would be "impossible."[2]

While this could simply have been a ploy to acquire more space in the *Universalist Magazine*, Whittemore had already shown a willingness to publish Scott's articles if they went over the original two-page limit. Scott's second essay had gone over that prescribed length and still been published without revision. A related but more probable rationale behind this call had to do with the fact that Whittemore received the major advantage of getting twice as much space to make his arguments. As illustrated by Whittemore's first and second essays, he published both in two parts. One half of one of Whittemore's essays roughly equaled the entirety of one of Scott's. This disparity in length allowed Whittemore the ability to craft arguments and more fully develop them. It offered him the opportunity to furnish more biblical examples since he simply had more space to work with. As Scott complained later in the article, he did not have the luxury of "setting down all the passages of scripture" and needed to be more discerning by selecting "a few of them, make a few brief remarks, and leave the reader to consult his bible and his conscience." While space alone did not make an argument superior, it certainly helped. Moreover, Whittemore had made a recurring point of Scott's limited use of biblical examples. Scott, however, made his intentions for more space explicit when he urged Whittemore for "an equal privilege [in] the Magazine with yourself, and I will make good my assertion [sic]." Likening the existing situation to a runner being forced to run a race with his legs tied, Scott reiterated his intention to adhere to his original plans.[3]

Scott partly undermined these complaints by taking half a column to reiterate the overarching argument from his second essay. The third essay was intended to be a direct

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[2] Scott, "Controversial.," 125.
[3] Scott, "Controversial.," 125.

continuation of the second article, particularly as it related to scriptural evidence or what he termed "direct proofs." As a result, a recapitulation was understandable and perhaps desirable. But while a review might have been necessary when methodically outlining an argument, doing so furnished Whittemore with the requisite ammunition to dismiss Scott's calls for more space.[4]

To address Whittemore's complaint that he had strayed from scriptural evidence, Scott opted to categorize this material into seven classes of biblical verses and analyze them broadly. The entirety of the third article was devoted to outlining and explaining all seven of them. Scott did incorporate and address some of Whittemore's argument in his third essay but remained focused on articulating the types of passages that supported future judgment and future punishment. To better understand Scott's salvation theology specifically, it is imperative to examine these seven classes of scripture and analyze how they served as a window into Scott's self-evident interpretation of the Bible more broadly.

The first class of scriptural verses were those which pertained to eternity. Scott emphasized those passages which spoke of things like "everlasting punishment," "eternal damnation," or "the vengeance of eternal fire." Derived entirely from the New Testament, these passages ranged from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark to the Book of Revelation. This juncture afforded Scott an opportunity to continue to develop his underlying argument on the proper way to interpret the Bible. Here Scott examined what he described as the position "the Universalists have always contended," namely the notion that the word "eternal" signified "no more than an age or period of duration." Since their debate was over future judgment, not the duration of that judgment, Scott argued that even a Universalist exegesis of passages like Matthew 25:46

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[4] In his third essay, Whittemore raised this exact point, telling Scott he was not "pinched for want of room" because "One of your longest paragraphs is occupied by the recapitulation of the second essay." See Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.," *Universalist Magazine*, February 10, 1827, vol. 8, no. 34, American Periodicals, ProQuest, p. 133

seemingly implied some form of future judgment or punishment. He did the same for the Book of Revelation. “You will probably object again to my quoting from Revelation,” he began, reminding readers that Whittemore had described it as “by far the most figurative of all sacred books.” He then highlighted an important distinction between them on the proper way to read the Bible. As discussed in the previous chapter, the differences between them could not be limited to a simple literal versus metaphorical dichotomy. Both accepted that some things were literally true, some things were historically true, and some things were metaphorically true. The real argument should be understood along lines of discernment and truth. For Scott, the Bible was an interconnected work that contained a singular, unified message and absolute truths that could be conveyed literally or metaphorically. “I cannot see why you should object to the doctrinal parts of that book [Revelation], all of which are corroborated by the analogy of scripture.”[5] Something may have been metaphorical but that did not mean the doctrinal teachings derived from it were anything less than absolute truths. Metaphorical text in the Bible, then, also pointed toward truth.

Accepting this distinction between the way he and Whittemore read the Book of Revelation, Scott instead opted to focus on “the evangelists.” Doing so had enabled him to promote a discussion of scriptural analysis – something Whittemore had admitted an interest in discussing further – while showing a willingness to engage in debate on his opponent’s terms. Here he operated under Whittemore’s own premise. When looking at the verses he cited which had used words like “eternal” and “everlasting,” he accepted that they could mean “age, or period of duration.”[6] But even if this Universalist interpretation were true, Scott argued that the argument fell short because the “age” was something which “must be either in this world or a

[5] Scott, “Controversial.,” 125.
[6] The seven verses Scott mentioned in this section were Matthew 25:46, Mark 3:29, Matthew 12:31-32, Hebrews 6:2, Jude 1:7, Revelation 16:11, and Revelation 20:10.

future state." An argument for the former, Scott conceded, might make sense with "the first sin, or to the sins committed in the first part of the life" since that person "has an age before him in this world." However, to say that such judgment and punishment could *only* occur in the present world failed to account for "the sins committed during the last years, months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes" because that person did not have "an age or period before him in this world." "The inference is undeniable," Scott concluded, "he shall be punished in the future state."[7]

The second class of scriptures were those "which represent ancient sinners as suffering the righteous judgments of God, after leaving this world." Scott's primary argument drew from Matthew 10:15, in which Jesus informed his followers that "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgement." From this verse, Scott engaged in a brief exegesis of a text that "plainly implied" three things. First, it suggested that the denizens of Sodom and Gomorrah were still suffering in the time of Jesus. Second, that they would continue to do so until Judgment Day. Third, they would not be released from this suffering but only that it would be more tolerable than that of "gospel sinners." Similarly, Scott echoed St. Jude's commentary on this point from Jude 1:7, noting that he had referred to the suffering of Sodom and Gomorrah in the present tense rather than the past tense.[8] For Scott, "the obvious meaning of those scriptures" was one that established the doctrine of future judgment and punishment. Efforts to do otherwise, he claimed, "would be to make that *no* example which God *set forth for an example*."[9] This further illustrates how the debate over the right way to read and interpret scriptures separated these theological worldviews. As seen, the question was not a simple matter

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[7] Scott, "Controversial.," 125.
[8] Jude 1:7 (KJV) reads, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."
[9] Scott, "Controversial.," 125.

of determining whether these passages ought to be read literally or metaphorically; it was a far more complicated debate over whether one should read the Bible with a self-evident meaning in sight or with a scrutinizing eye in search of a secret, hidden meaning.

The third class of passages built on these first two categories. It pertained to those who died in their sins. Citing John 8:21,24, Scott argued that Jesus' admonition required judgment in a future state since the absence of such judgment would deprive the passage of the admonition. Just as Whittemore had done in the first essay, Scott identified what he termed "the unbelieving Jews" as a "sufficient" example of those who had died in their sins and who therefore faced the future judgment of God. Again, Scott drew this rationale from an "inference from the whole," which he determined was "clear."[10] These assertions further reinforce Scott's belief in what he conceived of as a self-evident exegesis while illustrating that such an analysis did not necessarily mean an uncritical reading of the text. It required reading the Bible with an analytical eye but doing so with an awareness of its obvious meaning.

The fourth class of passages were those which promoted the lesson about the "hypocrite's hope" from Job 8:13-14.[11] Scott defined these hypocrites and the "presumptious sinner" as those "who, in their last moments, despairing of life and the things of it, yet hope for happiness after death." Voicing a "fear" that "many" of these individuals were those "trusting in the doctrine of Universal Salvation," he noted that Universalist assurances of a guaranteed salvation were given "in vain."[12] This contention that Universalism was a modern manifestation of the hypocrite's hope served as the primary thrust for this category of scriptural passages. Further citing Matthew 7:22-23 and Matthew 7:26-27, Scott argued that the Universalists were those who professed a

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[10] Scott, "Controversial.," 126.
[11] Job 8: 13-14 (KJV) reads, "So are the paths of all that forget God; And the hypocrites hope shall perish: Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web."
[12] Scott, "Controversial.," 126.

belief in Jesus Christ but did not carry out the will of God because confidence in universal salvation had provided them with a false hope.[13] This, he concluded, was a defective foundation for religious faith. Their faith was false, in Scott's view, because it was professed but not lived. In this case, Scott again highlighted an inexorable connection between faith and works.

The fifth group included those which established the destruction of sinners. In this class of verses, Scott implicitly addressed some of Whittemore's critiques over grace and salvation. Citing Philippians 3:19's excoriation of "the enemies of the cross of Christ" and 2 Peter 2:1-12's condemnation of "false prophets" and "false teachers," Scott argued again for his self-evident reading of the Bible since both passages stated that a destruction and ruin akin to Sodom and Gomorrah would befall sinners.[14] As Scott declared, "I cannot see how it is possible to reconcile your doctrine with these testimonies." He then directly targeted the view of salvation that Whittemore had outlined in part two of his second essay. "You teach that whatever may be the condition of the impenitent in this life," Scott observed, "they shall in the *end* be *saved*."[15] Both men, however, talked past each other at this juncture because they did not necessarily address one another's grievances with their respective denominations. In the case of Scott, he did not offer a clear rebuttal over deathbed confessions, and Whittemore did not show in his second essay how Universalism promoted moral virtue.

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[13] Matthew 7:22-23, 27-28 (KJV) reads, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." These passages deal with the distinction between those who merely professed a belief in Jesus Christ and those who "doeth the will of my Father."
[14] Philippians 3:19 is the first part of a parenthetical statement which speaks of what will befall "the enemies of the cross of Christ: "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earth things.)" 2 Peter 2:1-12 is a passage relating to the false prophets that lead believers astray.
[15] Scott, "Controversial.," 126.

The sixth and seventh classes of scripture went hand-in-hand, dealing with the passages that admonished a person to "make good use of his opportunities and means of grace" when available and the passages which "express the same thing negatively." Relying on what Scott termed the "plain inference" and "plain meaning" of a diverse series of passages, he concluded that the window of salvation was limited and further examined the role that grammatical tenses played in illustrating the present opportunity of salvation.[16] After the window had closed, Scott declared, the cause of the impenitent was "hopeless."[17] As was a recurring case with Scott, he stressed the self-evident interpretation and again emphasized the importance of tenses to show that the Bible had an obvious and easily discernible meaning.

Scott ended his third essay on the seven classes of scripture with a brief but biting ultimatum: he demanded that Whittemore grapple with his interpretation of scripture and "do something towards making an impression on my mind, favorable to Universalism" or "fly off, and evade … misrepresent my argument" and "add strength to my present impressions, that Universalism is a cunningly devised fable, a fearful delusion, a deadly error, a dangerous heresy."[18] This statement marked the most polemical and aggressive assertion to that point in the debate, but it nevertheless remained grounded in Scott's desire to maintain a contest between ideas and theologies rather than personalities.

Whittemore was out of the country when Scott's third essay went to press and he did not have a chance to read it until his return.[19] As a result, his reply appeared on February 10, 1827.

[16] John 9:4, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Isaiah 55:6, Ezekiel 33:11, and Hebrews 3:15-19 are the sixth class and Mark 3:29, Mark 3:43-48, Luke 14:24, and John 3:36 are the seventh class. These passages urged people to accept the gift of salvation and referred to it as a present phenomenon. For example, 2 Corinthians 6:2 referred to a "day of salvation." For the seventh case, John 3:36 proclaimed, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see light: but the wrath of God abideth on him."
[17] Scott, "Controversial.," 126.
[18] Scott, "Controversial.," 126.
[19] Scott, "Controversial.," 126.

This essay broke with his previous format in the sense that it was not divided into two parts. Instead, it was one long essay. The communication not only furthered the increasingly polemical turn for the debate; Whittemore also discussed what he deemed to be Scott's "sweeping assertions" about the Bible.[20] In doing so, Whittemore revealed his antipathy not merely for Scott as an individual, but for Methodism and the religious ministry more broadly. These themes would become more apparent as the debate reached its climax.

"I cannot express the regret I felt on reading your third essay," Whittemore began, noting that he felt "a sincere regret" about Scott's vision of the debate. Additionally, Scott's charge that Whittemore had engaged in evasion, illogical deduction, and declamation became a specific point of defensiveness. "You accuse me of the very things which every person of judgment knows you are doing," Whittemore complained before declaring that he would "expose in a professed follower of Jesus Christ, art and deception." These grievances were directed at Scott, but also targeted Methodism and the critics of Universalism more broadly. "You and your brethren through you," he wrote of Scott's symbolic place in the debate. In another juncture he repeated this phrase, saying that by allowing Scott to write in the *Universalist Magazine* he had "opened our columns to you, and your brethren through you." Whittemore then juxtaposed what he considered the Universalist pursuit of greater understanding with the Methodist desire to stifle debate. Universalists, he explained, were "Men of prudence, of judgment, of unsuspected and unimpeachable honesty" who simply came upon the realization that the scriptures were "wrongly applied." Their subsequent efforts to promote discussion with "opposing brethren" were met with "a string of texts, sometimes simply quoting them without any remarks." He called this

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[20] Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.," *Universalist Magazine*, February 10, 1827, vol. 8, no. 34, p. 133, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

behavior "disgusting."[21] This complaint cannot rightly be understood as a simple attack on Scott, as the context of Whittemore's complaints were intended to refer to the Methodists and other denominations writ large. There also ran an underlying anti-clerical streak through this argument which would become increasingly evident.

After transitioning from introduction to body paragraphs, Whittemore reiterated his "painful duty … of exposing what I consider to be art and deception practiced upon the reader."[22] His communication devoted most of its space to debating Scott on the parameters of the debate and engaging in a point-by-point examination of the same scriptures that Scott had surveyed in his third essay. As a result, it is necessary to examine a few examples from Whittemore's third article to better understand the character and contours of his biblical interpretation and how that understanding of the Bible differed from Scott.

Whittemore took umbrage with Scott's desire to keep the debate about ideas rather than personalities and alleged that Scott's real designs were to escape a losing debate. "This is not the real reason," he asserted before complaining that Scott's charge of evasion was proof that "you yourself deal out a most copious portion of invectives and personal charges."[23] This served as an example of the ways in which Whittemore interpreted criticism of his ideas or his debate style as personal attacks. In this case, Scott attacked Whittemore's argument and, more specifically, his argumentative style. In his third essay, Scott had used the word declamation twice. In the first instance, his exact words were "You have unhappily adopted the declamatory style and manner of writing." A few sentences later, he addressed Whittemore's "replies" and wrote that "you abound in evasion, assumption, illogical deduction, and declamation" but he immediately

[21] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133.
[22] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133.
[23] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133.

clarified in the following sentence that this was a reference to Whittemore's "method" and "its sophistry."[24] Although the second use of declamation straddled close to personality, the overarching context was clear. Scott did not, as Whittemore suggested, personally attack him. He instead attacked the style and method of argumentation that Whittemore had employed.

Nevertheless, Whittemore believed that he had been wronged and that Scott's calls to keep the debate on the theological question were not "sincere"; it was "proof that you had nothing better to offer." He then cited Scott's claims about a want of room in the paper as evidence that Scott "intended to deceive the reader." Declaring Scott's recapitulation of his second article in his third essay as proof of this, Whittemore concluded "you have more room now in the Magazine that you know what to do with." However, Whittemore's logic in this instance explicitly rested on the fact that Scott had claimed he needed, in Whittemore's words, "a volume to treat each of your subjects justly." Whittemore immediately departed from this point to simply criticize Scott for not properly making use of his space. In doing so, he did not reflect upon the scope of the question at hand or grapple with Scott's assertion that more space to the discussion could improve the quality of their debate. Moreover, Whittemore's point did not necessarily offer any solution as to what Scott could have done differently had he used a single paragraph more judiciously. This is an important consideration because it raises the question of what kind of content Scott could have realistically added with that limited space. Nevertheless, Whittemore did not linger on it long. He instead opted to use Scott's complaints as an opportunity to attack Methodism and tout Universalism: "Will the Editors of *Zion's Herald* grant the Universalists as much as we have granted you?"[25]

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[24] O. Scott, "Controversial," *Universalist Magazine*, January 27, 1827, vol. 8, no. 32, p. 125, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[25] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133.

Whittemore's foray into personalities during the debate over the debate itself continued with further criticism of what he deemed to be Scott's "exceedingly ungenerous" behavior. This stemmed from Whittemore's frustration with Scott's perceived unwillingness to engage with him in active debate. "You do not even attempt to defend yourself," he complained, contrasting that behavior with the way he had "patiently answered" every argument.[26] As shown by Scott's third essay, this was only true in the sense that both Scott and Whittemore viewed the purpose and parameters of the discussion very differently. As seen, Scott envisioned a debate in which both sides built their best case with some limited interaction, while Whittemore wanted back-and-forth rebuttals and line-by-line examinations. The former was a more passive debate through juxtaposition while the latter was more direct and confrontational. Although Scott did not defend himself in the way Whittemore wanted, the charge that Scott had not in any way addressed him was an inaccurate characterization of the debate up to that point.

Whittemore then continued to target Scott by making public the contents of a "personal interview" between the two of them. In Whittemore's recounting, he had "gently cautioned" Scott "to write in a good spirit and with candor." He then informed readers that Scott had looked to heaven, and "solemnly declared that you would write with a view to that judgment you were to defend, and with a realizing sense that *you* shall be judged." This promise had at first seemed to be "an affectation of solemnity." At the time of his third essay, however, Whittemore told his readers that his more pessimistic suspicions had been confirmed. "I see that a man who says he keeps a future judgment constantly in view," he wrote, "can make calculations to lead his fellow men astray." This allegation was a serious charge. The job of a minister was, in Whittemore's view, to lead people to the "truth." By accusing Scott of deliberately misleading the people,

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[26] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133.

Whittemore accused him of abrogating his ministerial duties. Beyond disclosing the contents of a private meeting, he cast grave aspersions on Scott's motivations. This was the clearest example of the sort of personal invectives that Whittemore had continuously decried just a few paragraphs earlier.[27]

The remainder of Whittemore's third essay examined each of the verses and classes of scripture that Scott had discussed. Given his essay's length of more than eleven columns over four pages, he had the luxury to offer a painstaking point-by-point response. Taken together, this scriptural analysis offers a clearer understanding of how Whittemore interpreted the same passages Scott had used while further cementing his turn to polemics and personality.

Whittemore's scriptural analysis in this essay reinforced his earlier emphasis on the metaphorical in contrast with Scott's self-evident exegesis. As seen by Scott's analysis, this controversy was not merely a dispute between whether the Bible was literally true or metaphorically true: it was a far more complicated argument over what was literally true and what was metaphorically true. Here Whittemore challenged Scott's reading of the word "eternity" by asking, "Will the Jews possess the land of Canaan to all eternity? Or do they even now possess it?" When examining Scott's first class of scriptural passages and his commentary on the idea of an "age" of punishment, Whittemore opted to discuss the example of suicide that Scott had used. Scott had argued that a person who sinned at the end of their life did not have an age in the world for which to be penalized for their transgressions, suggesting that it would take place in a future state of existence. In response, Whittemore offered a more literalistic rejoinder: "Does the Bible any where inform us … [that sins done at the end of life] shall be punished eternally?"[28] In this case, Whittemore's argument hinged upon the supposition that because the

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[27] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133-134.
[28] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 134.

Bible did not explicitly mention something that it therefore had no basis in fact. This further crystalized the crucial distinction between the two men regarding Biblical truth because both found different symbolism in different areas of the Bible. What Whittemore read with a strictly textualist eye, Scott had instead employed a more metaphorical form of analysis.

Whittemore's discussion of suicide, however, is important because it would become a recurring topic for the remainder of the debate. It further reinforces Whittemore's theology regarding the present world and the materialistic affliction of sinners. While both he and Scott concurred that suicide was wrong, Whittemore argued that a person who committed suicide did so because "his sins compel him to become his own executioner" and that it was therefore the result of that person's own "moral degradation."[29] While Whittemore was not necessarily without sympathy or pity for a person who took their own life, lamenting the "depths of despair" that drove a person to that action, his assertion that suicide was the byproduct of sin nevertheless highlights his worldly and materialistic theology and his belief that God's judgment was confined exclusively to the present world.

Examining the fifth class of scriptures that Scott had cited – those which discussed the end of the impenitent as being destruction – Whittemore again juxtaposed his scriptural approach to Philippians 3:19 with that of Scott's. Where Scott had emphasized what he viewed as the plain meaning of the word "end," Whittemore instead turned to other passages where "end" had "a great variety of significations." This argument rested on the word *telos* and the fact that it could also "signify an event, consequence, fruit, recompense, a short sum, an import or tax, &c." The

[29] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 134. Whittemore may have later attempted to walk this claim back, arguing "The wicked sometimes are their own punishers. In cases of suicide, the sin is the intention to do the deed, the execution of it may be the punishment." However, a plain reading of his earlier assertion that "his sins compel him to become his own executioner" is referring to something more broadly since sins are plural in this case and the phrase "become his own executioner" could either refer to the act of suicide or the decision to try and commit suicide.

"end" spoken of by St. Paul, Whittemore concluded, could therefore refer to the present world. "Your sole dependence is placed on the word end," he observed, "as though it invariably signified final destination, which is not true." Similarly, Whittemore criticized Scott's analysis of John 3:36 in the seventh class of passages for what he saw as the same deficiency. "All you depend upon in that passage is the future tense of the verb," he commented, asking, "Cannot a verb be in a future tense without referring to the future state?"[30] These examples illustrate Whittemore's desire to scrutinize the text in search of their hidden meaning.

In addition to further developing his analytical framework for reading the Bible, the body paragraphs and conclusion of this essay served to reinforce the content of the introduction. These paragraphs represented a marked shift into the polemical. And Whittemore continued to direct his rhetorical fire not only at Scott personally, but also the denomination and class of ministers that he represented. This antipathy towards ministers first appeared in this essay but would continue to be an undercurrent that shaped Whittemore's argument and tone for the remainder of the discussion.

Although Whittemore had already drawn a connection between Scott personally and the Methodist Episcopal Church more broadly in the introduction, he continued to periodically blur this line in his body paragraphs and conclusion. This stemmed from Whittemore's belief that Scott and his fellow Methodist ministers were arrogant and prideful. For example, Whittemore targeted Scott's use of the "unbelieving Jews" as an example of those who had "died in their sins." "Those who make much talk about the Jews," he retorted, "forget that they themselves will die sinners; ... while they have no doubt concerning their own future happiness." It is important to note, however, that Whittemore had interpreted the parable of the wheat and the tares as an

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[30] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 135-136.

allegory for the destruction of Israel in his first essay. His prior willingness to criticize the Jewish people makes his sudden condemnation of Scott's attack on the "unbelieving Jews" appear more cynical than genuine. Furthermore, Whittemore, for all his defensiveness regarding Scott's purported ignorance of Universalist teaching, made no effort to examine or analyze the concept of dying in sin.[31] Instead, his analysis treated the phrase simply as being a person who died while bearing the taint of sin. Theologically, these are two very different concepts. Yet Whittemore made no effort to distinguish them. Finally, Whittemore's language in this excerpt is crucial. His use of plural pronouns in response to Scott underscores the way he treated this debate. "Those," "they," and "their" all suggest the statement referenced more than one person. For Whittemore, Scott was a mere avatar for him to engage with the Methodist ministry.

Whittemore shed further light on his motivations a few paragraphs later. "Produce stronger reasons, if you have them," he taunted, reminding Scott that "You have four weeks in which to prepare each essay, while I am driven to write my replies immediately." He then explained that his motivation for wanting Scott to deliver more impressive arguments stemmed from a desire to see the best arguments that the Methodists had to offer. But in doing so, Whittemore implicitly suggested that he wanted to see their strongest case, not in a greater pursuit of the truth, but so he could better dispense with it. Better arguments, he wrote, would ensure "that Universalists may know all on which their opponents rely to support their sentiments."[32] The purpose of the debate, then, was not to convince but to embolden. It was

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[31] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 134. The idea of a person "dying in their sins" is theologically different than a person dying with having committed sin. The former was derived from John 8:24 (KJV), which reads "ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believed not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." The phrase referenced individuals who had not embraced Jesus Christ as son of God, which was a completely different concept than a person who had sinned in life. Whittemore overlooked this point when addressing Scott's statement about dying in sin by simply replying that "we are all more or less sinful."
[32] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 135.

devoid of the possibility of persuasion inherent in an intellectual discussion akin to the one Whittemore had championed in his earlier essays.

Just as the debate had emboldened Whittemore's preconceptions about Methodist teaching on salvation and judgment, so too did it reinforce his presumptions about that denomination's ministers. In particular, he went on the offensive over Scott's effort to link the hypocrite's hope from Job with Universalism. For Whittemore, the hypocrites were not the Universalists; they were Scott and the Methodists, whom he likened to the Pharisees and to the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son. "If all mankind are going to heaven," he wrote, "they [Methodists and ministers] do not wish to go and, in a word, they think a limited future punishment better than none at all." And these hypocrites, he continued, would rather go to hell than reside in a heaven alongside sinners. They were like the hypocrites in Job, and it was their hope in their own moral superiority that would perish. "Their traditions will perish, their doctrines will perish," he boasted.[33]

This resentment of the Methodist ministry personified in the character of Orange Scott was rooted in what Whittemore viewed as their pharisaic moral superiority. However, this assumption rested on Whittemore's contempt for Methodist and traditionalist doctrines of future judgment and future punishment. More specifically, it was "the consequences" of these teachings rather than the way the Methodists would "misapply" the Bible that led Whittemore to adopt a harsher tone. "The unavoidable consequence of this position," he observed, "is that idiots, infants, Jews, and all the heathen that have lived or ever shall live without hearing of Christ will be damned forever."[34] This argument served as a continuation of Whittemore's earlier criticisms of the sincerity of deathbed confessions. While Scott had employed similar arguments, he did so

[33] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 135.
[34] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 136.

with one major difference. In his essays, he had focused on broad, archetypical, hypothetical cases – such as the slaver in his first essay or the murderer and the despot in the second – and examined what he saw as the injustice that would take place under a Universalist worldview. This serves as another instance in which Scott sought to keep the debate strictly about theology and its real-world implications rather than becoming a mere inter-denominational airing of grievances. Whittemore, by contrast, continued his march in a more anti-clerical direction, concluding his third essay with the sentence: "The public begin to see that to shew that the passages which the clergy apply to a future state of misery *necessarily* have such a reference, is a *sine qua non*."[35] Not only did Whittemore frame the debate as symbolic of a larger struggle in society between the people and the clergy, he reframed the more traditional doctrines on salvation in unflattering terms that its proponents would not have used.

Even in the middle of the Whittemore-Scott debate, however, their discussion attracted the attention of a wider audience. The *Christian Intelligencer* took interest in Whittemore's third essay, quoting a portion of his introduction where he had complained about Scott's "string of texts." The *Universalist Magazine*, hoping to draw attention to the *Intelligencer's* favorable review of the debate, published the extract and the newspaper's "anecdote" that had likened Scott to an "illiterate" Anglican convert who challenged his former pastor with a string of Bible quotes he did not understand.[36] But rather than merely criticize the way Scott read the Bible, the

[35] Whittemore, "Controversial.," 133.
[36] The way the *Christian Intelligencer* analogized the debate between Scott and Whittemore through their metaphor raises some interesting considerations. When the Anglican convert, Mr. Beach, challenged his former pastor, Dr. Dickinson, he quoted the Bible three times and each time the pastor dismissed the passage and asked for another. "I see the text indeed, but really cannot perceive what bearing it has upon the subject," the pastor replied to Beach in one instance. This anecdote, whether real or not, was designed to act as a strawman generally. However, the pastor's reply is illustrative, especially when placed within the context of the Scott-Whittemore debate. The pastor made no effort to understand *why* Beach would interpret that passage to arrive at such a conclusion. Whittemore would similarly dismiss the verses that Scott cited as irrelevant without providing an explanation. Given Whittemore's expressed interest in a debate over the proper way to interpret the Bible, this unwillingness to even pursue a basic level of understanding of his opponent's worldview is especially jarring. Moreover, it is also worth observing that

Intelligencer also concluded that the debate was a waste of time for Whittemore and the Universalists. "I am not able to argue with you," the anecdotal pastor had replied in response to the series of verses. The Anglican convert then proceeded to declare victory and boast of his success. To the *Intelligencer* and to the *Universalist Magazine*, the anecdote spoke for itself. "Whenever we see a man ... who quotes much Scripture he does not understand," the *Intelligencer* concluded, "and thinks that he thereby refutes the propositions of his opponent, we generally feel disposed to tell him this story, and *give him the argument*."[37]

Nevertheless, the argument between Orange Scott and Thomas Whittemore continued. Scott's fourth essay was published in the *Universalist Magazine* on March 3, 1827, and immediately delved into salvation theology. He dedicated this essay to proving "that eternal life is suspended upon certain conditions to be performed by us, and that we may fail in performing them."[38] This allowed Scott to juxtapose his theology of a conditional salvation that combined grace, faith, and works together with the absolute salvation by grace that Whittemore promoted. Beyond an analysis of the way in which a person was saved, Scott also engaged Whittemore on the question of whether Universalism or traditional Christian theology was the superior model for inculcating morality in society. Most significantly, he once again challenged Universalism on the grounds of free will.

The disagreement over the nature of salvation between Scott's Methodism and Whittemore's Universalism, despite the practical implications, still rested on a theological foundation. For Scott, the natural state for humanity was not salvation, but damnation. Instead of

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when Scott opted to incorporate philosophical and pragmatic concepts into his argument, Whittemore boasted that the pivot was proof that Scott knew the scriptures supported Universalism.

[37] "Anecdote.," *Universalist Magazine*, February 24, 1827, vol. 8, no. 36, p. 143, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

[38] O. Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," *Universalist Magazine*, March 3, 1827, vol. 8, no. 37, p. 145, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

an absolute salvation, Scott contended that "salvation is conditional." Salvation, he argued, was the result of "a covenant between man and God," and one which by its very nature suggested that humans had certain "terms" that they were required to fulfill or else "he [God] is under no obligation." Drawing a contrast with Whittemore's absolute salvation by grace, Scott argued that "eternal salvation" was not "the *absolute* gift of God" and was instead linked with certain conditions that had been outlined in the Bible. If the conditions were not met, then "they [people] remain exposed to all that misery from which he came to save them." Scott's assumptions about humanity, then, are essential to understanding this position. Humans were naturally inclined toward sin, not virtue. "All mankind by the law are sinners," he wrote, noting that the Gospel alone was "God's merciful method of saving sinners." As a result, the burden was placed on people to meet the conditions of the biblical covenant. A person had to make the conscious decision to enter into the covenant with God in order to enjoy the possibility of salvation. Since humanity was inherently outside the covenant because of original sin, they could not receive "any of its benefits" until they had done so.[39] In this fourth essay, Scott outlined what he considered to be the three significant conditions for salvation: faith, repentance, and obedience.

These three conditions were all deeply interwoven together. To support this argument, he drew on several New Testament verses. Taken together, they highlighted his view of a conditional salvation rather than an absolute one. They also further reinforce Scott's approach to reading and understanding the Bible. For example, when citing John 3:18 and again referencing John 3:36, he reiterated his view that "These passages are too plain" since they each said the faithful would receive salvation.[40] He contrasted his interpretation here with "my *verbose* antagonist," noting that he – and not Whittemore – was the one reading the Bible "unbiased by

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[39] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 145-146.
[40] Scott drew from Romans 1:16, Hebrews 4:2, John 3:18, and John 3:36 to support his claim about faith.

the love of theory."[41] This explicit link between Scott's approach to the Bible and his conservative critique of Whittemore is significant. In essence, Scott accused Whittemore of conducting biblical *eisegesis* rather than biblical exegesis. Whittemore, Scott suggested, did not read *out* of the scriptures their intended meaning of conditional salvation; he instead read *into* them his preconceived and preferred theories about universal salvation. Exalting theory to such a degree made the Bible a matter of secondary importance. The Bible, according to Scott, clearly outlined faith as a condition of salvation. He then portrayed Whittemore's attempts to say that it did not as an effort to alter the plain meaning of the text because the facts and evidence did not conform to his theories and his system. After citing six verses in his discussion of faith, he again said, "These passages are too plain to require comment."[42] Despite criticisms from Whittemore and the *Christian Intelligencer*, Scott continued to utilize his self-evident exegesis.

Like faith, repentance required one to yield their "hard and impenitent heart" and their "wrath" in exchange for "the forgiveness of sins and the favor of God." Like John Wesley, Scott held that the grace that came through faith, but that repentance changed a person and brought one closer to "the favor of God." Repentance, then, helped open the door to salvation without contradicting free will, as the choice of whether to accept God's gift ultimately rested with a person and their conscience. Scott then concluded this section on conditions with a very brief examination into the additional need for obedience, which he understood as "persevering in well doing" and juxtaposed this with what he termed "*apostacy*."[43]

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[41] Italics in original. Scott further said that Universalists could not find "one clear and express passage of Scripture" to support their position. The phrase "my verbose antagonist" is also the first time that Scott can be said to personally attack Whittemore in the entire debate.
[42] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 145-146.
[43] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 146.

Of greater significance than the three conditions themselves were the implications of them. The need for faith, repentance, and obedience were hardly novel ideas in Christianity. They had been discussed for centuries. But Scott's specific framework united these conditions with salvation in a way that is noteworthy. He explicitly drew from the tradition of free will, further fleshed this idea out in his fourth essay, and then used it to help make the moral case for future judgment.

Free will was a vital component of human existence, and an underlying source of disagreement between the two men. While humans were "formed for immortality, and endowed with [the] understanding, will and affections" that made a person "capable of knowing, loving and serving his God," this was only a part of their nature. "He [man]," Scott argued, "possesses *liberty of will* and the *power of choice*: and therefore he is a moral agent, accountable for his conduct."[44] Citing Dr. Chauncy as an authority, Scott concluded "that free agency in man is a *self-evident* thing." The capacity to choose was crucial. Every person had a different moral character that tilted towards good or evil. Some people carried their lives in such a way that made them "the children of God" while others behaved as "the children of the devil."[45] Furthermore, it was the people themselves who created this moral distinction, because if God had been the one to create the distinction, then he would be the architect of evil. For Scott, God could not be the creator of evil nor be indifferent to its existence. Only free will could reconcile the existence of evil with that of a loving and just God. Damnation, then, was the consequence of a person's free choices.

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[44] Italics in original. This concept of the moral free agent was popularized during the Second Great Awakening by preachers like Charles G. Finney.
[45] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 145.

The idea of repentance itself further rested upon a free will foundation and was deeply connected with the distinction between Whittemore's absolute salvation and Scott's conditional salvation. "Repentance is no where represented as the absolute gift of God," Scott wrote, adding that it was instead "*a duty and a work of man*." Again, the biblical conditions for salvation were left to a person and could only be fulfilled through their free will. Nevertheless, Scott did not fundamentally disagree with one of the arguments Whittemore had promoted in his first and second essays: that God wished the best for his creation. Whittemore, however, had concluded that this meant God would save all creation. For Scott, however, such a view did not take free will into account. God wanted humans to live a life of holiness because, as "moral creatures," it "is as necessary to their happiness as it is pleasing to his sight." Nevertheless, God could do no more than "require" holiness because anything else would negate the entire purpose of morality. "He cannot infuse holiness into his creatures contrary to their will, or without their will," Scott argued, "They must feel their need of it, must desire it, labor for it, practice it."[46] God made humans with the capacity for goodness but, in Scott's view, whether they chose to be good was ultimately their choice. And the consequences of that choice therefore belonged to them as well.

By making salvation contingent upon freely embracing "moral holiness" and the conditions of salvation, Scott then turned his sights on Universalism itself. In particular, he argued that only his more traditional theology was adequately suited to inculcate virtue in society. Universalism, by contrast, produced the opposite effect. In part, he wrote:

> Universalism is but poorly adapted to reform mankind…. Do you think, Sir, you can reform the ungodly by telling them that they may give themselves up to "license unrecalled?" Be not offended, Sir, if you do not use this language, you use language that amounts to it. Your system speaks this language to the sinner – "You cannot, by any thing, in your power, endanger the salvation of your soul, or incur the least punishment after death. You ought to be moral for your own benefit, and the benefit of society in this world…. And besides, you are not free-agents, you are not the disposers of your own

[46] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 145-146.

> will, or actions; you cannot do otherwise than you do, and God was never displeased, never angry with you, and will never hold you rigidly to answer for what you do in this world. There is no difference between sin and the punishment of sin, or at any rate, sin is its own punishment…. You cannot lose eternal life, nor deserve eternal punishment, and therefore you may dismiss all anxiety about the future. He who made you will take care of you."[47]

Many of the assertions included in this summation of Universalist teaching had been articulated by Whittemore himself in his three essays. Scott, however, pressed further and asked Whittemore why his "system" could not be accurately labeled "a fatal delusion" since "it goes to hide both the sin and the danger of mankind from their view." This point became the thrust of Scott's entire argument against Universalism. It was, Scott observed, "the effect which your doctrine has on the multitude who embrace it." If all were saved and if all were convinced that they would enjoy salvation in the future state of existence irrespective of their sins in the present, then there was no incentive for a person to live a godly, holy, or moral life. And that led Scott to blame not the "thoughtless" who had embraced this teaching, but the individuals who promoted it. "Do they [the people] not give up all thought of serious godliness, and live according to the course of this world?" he asked, inquiring further, "will not their blood be required at your hands?"[48]

Although Scott had leveled a serious charge against Whittemore, arguing that his teachings were responsible for the damnation of countless people, he insisted that he did not intend malice with the allegation. "Think me not an enemy," he urged, informing Whittemore he had "no motive for feeling unpleasant towards your person." His actions were done with good intention. "If *I* do not admonish you, who will?" he asked, hoping that "the time is not distant when you will view this admonition as an act of true friendship."[49]

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[47] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 146.
[48] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 145.
[49] Scott, "Controversial.: To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore.," 146-147.

"Your fourth essay," Whittemore announced a week later, "should have been received by us one week sooner than it was sent." As was the case with his first and second essays, Whittemore published his fourth one over the course of two weeks. "The whole weight of your essay rests upon one or two mistakes," he began, arguing that this error was rooted in "your inattention to the true meaning of scripture language." This assertion illustrates the differing forms of exegesis utilized by both men: Scott's belief the Bible was self-evident versus Whittemore's search for what he considered the secret "true" reading of the text. Beyond an examination of the Bible, Whittemore said that his fourth reply would focus on "a few other things" that came up in Scott's fourth essay.[50]

Whittemore summarized the "primary object" of Scott's communication as follows: "that the happiness of mankind in the future state is suspended upon conditions of obedience rendered in this life." He correctly recounted Scott's view that the biblical covenant required conditions of faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance. Together, he wrote, these factors made "the life and soul" of the essay. But this essay, Whittemore observed, rested on a faulty foundation. "The mistake on which the whole weight of your essay" rested, he wrote, "consists in your supposing that when the sacred writers speak of eternal life and salvation, they invariably refer to the future state." He blamed this error not exclusively on Scott alone but on "your order generally." He then defined salvation as "A present blessing … in consequence of receiving Christ" and he quoted several biblical verses that employed a past tense for salvation to suggest these things existed in the present state.[51] And since salvation and damnation were opposites, it stood to

[50] Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Reply to Essay, No. IV.," *Universalist Magazine*, March 10, 1827, vol. 8, no. 38, p. 149, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[51] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 149. To support his argument about salvation, Whittemore quoted Luke 19:9, Luke 7:50, Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 3:21, 1 Peter 1:8-9, 1 Corinthians 1:18, and 2 Corinthians 2:15, as well as citing Parkhurst.

reason that if people were saved in the present world, then they could be damned in the present world as well.

Whittemore applied the same logic to eternal life. This stemmed not only from the same past tense verbiage, but also from the process of one's conversion to Christianity.[52] "The Christians knew they had *passed* from death unto life," he observed, while those who had not converted to Christianity instead "possessed the spirit of hatred" and "were destitute of this life: they *abode* in death." Furthermore, he argued that the phrase "enter into life" from John 5:12 was "synonymous" with Mark 4:43,45,47's phrasing of "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God." By this logic, it stood to reason that "men enter the kingdom of God here on earth."[53]

The differences between Scott and Whittemore on the issues of salvation, eternal life, and even repentance hinged upon timing. Whittemore's effort to prove that these things took place in the present, however, only further highlighted the ways in which their respective theologies were diametrically opposed. The difference rested on the fact that Whittemore believed they existed only in the present world, while Scott argued they must point towards a future state. As Whittemore contended, "salvation and eternal life were those effects of repentance and faith which men experienced when they embraced the Gospel." They were, in essence, the "blessings which the believer experiences here" and not in the future state. This offered one unmistakable implication, which Whittemore himself acknowledged: that the blessings and curses connected to faith and repentance must exist in the present world. In essence, he argued that Scott had inadvertently made the case for Universalism. "The very passages you quote to shew that eternal

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[52] Here Whittemore cited John 6:47, John 5:24, and 1 John 3:14-15.
[53] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 149.

life and salvation are conditionally bestowed upon men," he wrote, "are a proof that these are the present blessings of faith, and do not refer to the future state."[54]

Whittemore's entire argument rested on this foundation. In his opinion, Scott had not proven that salvation referred to the future state. "You, Sir, bring forward sufficient proof of what we do not deny," he wrote before asserting that none of Scott's evidence addressed the actual points of contention between them.[55] Scott, he complained, had not presented any evidence of a divine judgment in the future. He then likened Scott's reading of the Bible to a careless lawyer who traveled out of town to find evidence to exonerate his client but had forgotten his client's name on the journey. Nevertheless, the lawyer procured a document vouching for the character of a completely different person and then tried to use that to vindicate his client. This anecdote characterized Whittemore's view of Scott's scriptural analysis. Like Scott, the lawyer "proved what judge and jury both allowed, that some person was honest, but he offered no evidence which affected the cause in question."[56]

But Whittemore went further in his criticisms, accusing his opponent of omitting key details from scripture. When analyzing 1 Peter 4:17, for example, he noted, "you were very careful to leave out what would serve to shew that your application is incorrect." Whittemore did not leave this allegation as mere insinuation. He did not suggest that Scott omitted it for brevity or out of ignorance, but that he had done so strictly to maintain his argument. It was an act of deception upon the readers of the *Universalist Magazine*. "The reason why he did it each reader will see," Whittemore announced forebodingly.[57]

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[54] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 149-150.
[55] Whittemore further added that "These passages prove that what the sacred scriptures denominate salvation depends on faith, this I grant." He then insisted that "I never denied" that "salvation is a consequence of repentance" and agreed with Scott that it was "connected with obedience."
[56] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 150.
[57] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 150.

This fundamental issue with Scott's scriptural analysis once again paved the way for Whittemore's broader attack on Methodism and the critics of Universalism. Universalists were the free thinkers who would read different sides of the question before embracing the truth. This behavior, he maintained, had given Universalists a "strong confidence" in their beliefs and made them extremely "zealous" to "expose what we conceive to be the prevailing errors of the religious world." This stemmed from a belief that the clergy and established churches deliberately peddled false teachings to mislead the people. Whittemore wondered aloud what might happen if "You [Scott] and your brethren" would instead give "one half the time to studying the scriptures with proper means of understanding them that you give ... to support a system manifestly not taught in scripture." Instead, ministers like Scott, "blindly receiving the threatening of the Scriptures in the sense given to them in the darker ages of the church," would "come zealously blundering into contact with the most palpable facts," and face defeat at the hands of better-informed Universalists.[58]

However, Whittemore did not confine his critique of the clergy to their deception. Seeking to turn Scott's conservative critique about "theory" and "system" on its head, he charged Scott and his fellow Methodists with being the ones actually "Prepossessed in favor of your system."[59] *They* were the ones wedded to an abstract and unprovable theory. The historical parallel is also noteworthy. Whittemore offered a subtle but significant juxtaposition between himself as radical reformer and Scott and the Methodists as the conservative established church, a not-so-subtle reference to the Protestant Reformation with the Protestants now taking the role of the Catholic Church.

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[58] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 149.
[59] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 149.

Whittemore could make this argument because the clergy were indistinguishable. In response to a passage that Scott had said was "too plain" that it could only be denied by a person "at the peril of his soul," he retorted: "Well, Sir, we should do it at the peril of our bodies and lives, if the clergy possessed the power they once had." To further cement this Catholic-Methodist metaphor, Whittemore highlighted an instance where Scott interpreted a passage differently than most Methodists and alleged that Scott had committed a "heresy" that he would need to "settle" with "his own order." He then concluded the first half of his fourth essay with a final scathing indictment of the clergy and their motivations. He observed that "the clergy undoubtedly know these things" but would not acknowledge them because they needed to "keep a sufficient number of people ignorant to support them in their present employment." The clergy as a group, then, promoted religious teachings as part of a scheme to acquire money from the ignorant masses and would, in Whittemore's estimation, deny the very words of Jesus himself in pursuit of that goal. "These remarks would be unjust," he concluded, "if they were not true." As illustrated in his third essay, Whittemore had increasingly set on the path to transform his theological debate with Scott into a polemic against the clergy more broadly. This stemmed from his frustration with what he perceived as their arrogance and their belief that they held a monopoly on biblical exegesis. "These clergy tell us, that we cavil with the scriptures at our peril!" he complained at the very end of his March 10 communication.[60] The fourth essay therefore continued the anti-clerical trend and, in doing so, revealed Whittemore's underlying hostility to the critics of Universalism on a personal and institutional level. He not only impugned their individual motivations by accusing them of promoting things they knew to be false; he also accused them of doing so as a way of controlling the masses.

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[60] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 150.

The second half of Whittemore's fourth essay, published the following week on March 17, served as a direct continuation of this argument. "You know you are wrong," he wrote in the opening paragraph, adding a few sentences later that "you are determined to maintain a doctrine which you are conscious is false." Scott, he reasoned, argued by "assertion" rather than evidence. "What have you done towards proving it?" he asked, immediately answering his rhetorical question, "*You have asserted it, and that is all*." But this was not merely a grievance against Scott. Whittemore immediately made his broader point explicit. "Do you not know that a clergyman's assertion is not worth so much as it formerly was?" he challenged. Scott and his fellow clerics were not only wrong; they were malicious ideologues wedded to a preferred theory. "As though you would rejoice to prove the misery of mankind," he wrote, "you greedily catch at every little circumstance to build up your favorite theory." In another instance, he took issue with Scott's admonition of him. He complained that Scott, and the clergy by implication, would "admonish every one who does not obtain your opinion," even to the point where they would "admonish the sacred writers."[61] The clergy were so committed to preserving their doctrinal theories and systems that they wielded their power and influence to mislead people.

After a brief exploration of a few more verses that his March 10 communication had omitted for lack of space, Whittemore was satisfied with his counterargument. In his view, he had thoroughly bested Scott's theology of conditional salvation. Scott had, to put it bluntly, "utterly failed, failed in every point, failed on every side, of proving the doctrine of future punishment." And he had failed because he had committed the fatal error of using the incorrect definitions of eternal life and salvation. Whittemore's "true meaning," however, largely ignored Scott's understanding of those words. He did not engage Scott's interpretation of the Bible. In

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[61] Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Reply to Essay, No. IV.," *Universalist Magazine*, March 17, 1827, vol. 8, no. 39, p. 153, ProQuest, American Periodicals, ProQuest.

that sense, Whittemore committed the same act he had accused the clergy of doing. Nevertheless, he was convinced that Scott's mistake was either one of ignorance or malice. "You were entirely unsuspicious," he said, "or else presumed so much upon the ignorance of the public as to suppose they would not discover it."[62] Given his statements about clergy, the latter seemed the most straightforward possibility.

But absent in the entire essay was any rebuttal – or any discussion – of free will. Whittemore did not say a single word directly addressing the subject. Although both men were under spatial constraints, this oversight is one that cannot be overlooked. Whittemore had continuously taken umbrage with the way Scott conducted himself in the debate. He was frustrated that Scott had opted to present his case with limited rebuttal. Whittemore had generally practiced what he preached, preferring to rebut Scott's argument in a detailed, almost methodical manner, and, in some cases, he went line-by-line and point-by-point through the essays. But he wrote nothing about free will. Given Scott's emphasis on the topic in his fourth essay, this absence remains even more jarring. Free will had been an integral component to Scott's entire argument for conditional salvation: namely, that conditions were both reasonable and necessary because individuals had free will and, as a result, there needed to be clear consequences for sinful behavior. Given the significance of this point to Scott's overall argument – that universal salvation could not account for those who willingly defied God and rejected his gift of grace by word and deed – Whittemore needed to address the question of free will. If there was free will, then God could not force an evildoer to accept grace and forcibly save them when they had chosen to do evil on their own volition. This was a significant point of contention, and it was a subject that Whittemore completely sidestepped.

[62] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 153.

The closest Whittemore came to grappling with the concept of free will came briefly near the end of his essay, when he suggested that a murderer may not be responsible for their crimes. "We consider it a great evil to him [the murderer] that his passions have thus the controul of reason," he wrote, which offered the implication that the hypothetical murderer committed their crimes because they had been controlled by passion. Moreover, the phrase also suggested that this great evil had been inflicted upon the murderer by some external force. And if a person had not freely chosen to commit a murder, then they were not as morally responsible for the crime.[63] Scott's perspective treated sin as a choice and an act of defiance of God while Whittemore's view held that sin was often the result of external factors beyond a person's control.

Whittemore devoted the remainder of his argument – roughly four columns – to Scott's critiques of Universalist morality. He called the arguments in this portion of Scott's essay "some of the grossest misrepresentations of Universalists and their sentiments which I ever saw."[64] He saw this as the behavior of a desperate debater who knew they had lost the argument and had therefore chosen to lash out. In particular, he took issue with Scott's suggestion that Universalists did not seek to reform individual behavior and that they were apathetic towards moral evil. In part, he explained:

> If you wish to know what we do to convert mankind, I will inform you. We in the first place endeavor to shew them what true religion is in the sight of God. … It is evident … religion consists in *doing* good and abstaining from evil. We believe that to "devour widow's houses and for a pretence make long prayer" is *not* religion. … We believe that many may make great professions, exalt themselves above others, "appear beautiful outward," and yet not be religious men. And we believe all this because Jesus teaches it. In order to make men obey God, we would first make them love him; ... To make men love God we teach them, not that he will torment them in a hell throughout all ages, but

[63] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154. Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Reply to Essay, No. IV.," *Universalist Magazine*, March 10, 1827, vol. 8, no. 38, p. 149, ProQuest, American Periodicals. Whittemore's earlier essays laid a foundation for this claim by contesting Scott's view that some individuals did not have a conscience. If an individual's conscience did not work, as was the case for pagans before the birth of Christ, then any moral failing they committed could not be said to be their fault.
[64] Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Reply to Essay, No. IV.," *Universalist Magazine*, March 17, 1827, vol. 8, no. 39, p. 153, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

> that he is good and that he loves them. … And permit me to observe, we believe that the representations you give of the divine character and government, have a tendency to prevent the spread of love to God and *genuine* repentance.[65]

This quotation captures a crucial dimension of the debate, and another area in which both men held fundamentally irreconcilable views. Whittemore believed that people would do good and become religious if they were taught that God loved them. His conviction that God loved everyone meant there could be no hell because a loving God would never condemn his creation. Hell, or any other "imaginary terrors," were therefore incompatible with Whittemore's conception of God.[66]

This perspective led him to conclude the whole of traditional Christianity had been in error. "We do not think that to represent God as requiring the blood of his own Son to appease his wrath and satisfy his justice," he observed, "will cause men to love him, or that to tell them he will torment them … will have that effect." The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the centerpiece of the Bible in the traditional Christian worldview. Even that pivotal moment, understood as God sacrificing his son to atone for his creation's sins, was not only unnecessary but counterproductive. Whittemore's new standard upended the older foundation of sacrifice and replaced it with an amorphous conception of love. But that love was not simply one that stressed God's love for his creation, it also clamored for the inverse. It discarded that which it did not feel would allow people to love God. As a result, Whittemore went even further, likening the traditional understanding of God to "the most unfeeling despot" who oppressed his own people.[67] That God did not promote love and, as such, did not reside in the Bible. This was the true foundation to Whittemore's framework for reading the Bible. He read the texts with an eye

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[65] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 153-154.
[66] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154.
[67] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154.

to see how it pointed towards love; that it *must* point towards love. That was the secret and "true" meaning behind the text.

Moreover, Whittemore carried these views about hell and damnation to their logical conclusion. If hell were but a fiction incompatible with the loving God, it stood to reason that the people who created it had ulterior motives. "We preach no imaginary terrors," he declared, adding that "the mere imaginations of the clergy with respect to future punishment we do not preach" because they would not have "a good effect" on making people love God. Hell was fundamentally Catholic by its very nature. It was a relic of "the dark ages of Christianity."[68] The Middle Ages, he noted, were when the "doctrine of everlasting misery" was at its zenith. This chapter in church history had not improved the moral condition of the people or the clergy. For Whittemore, these facts pointed to an unmistakable conclusion: Scott stood on the shoulders of the medieval popes and the followers of Islam. In particular, the parallel between Scott's views and Islam became a featured component. "Mr. Scott, like the Mahometan," Whittemore observed, "says, 'I believe in judgment to come, in future everlasting punishment.'" Whittemore did not, however, limit the parallel to theology alone. "Was not Mahomet noted for his pride, ambition, lust, and cruelty?" he asked rhetorically, before proclaiming that hell had not restrained the behavior of the Prophet Mohammed or his fellow Muslims.[69]

Traditional Christianity, not Universalism, was the system that therefore promoted vice and immorality in society more broadly. This stemmed from Whittemore's objection to Scott's previous assertions that the wicked often prospered and escaped justice while the righteous suffered. Here he returned to the death-bed confession scenario from the second essay. "If even

[68] Whittemore also used a similar phrase in his March 10 communication, likening Scott's doctrines to "the darker ages of the church."
[69] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154.

you should bring men to fear it for themselves," he observed, "there remains always this relief, they can escape it any moment, even if it be that in which they resign the quivering breath of life, by repentance." Scott's worldview was fundamentally immoral because it offered the greatest comfort to the wicked. As Whittemore explained the logic of it, traditional theology led the "sinner" to conclude that "I will sin here as long as I can, but I will be sure to repent before I die, and thus I shall secure happiness here and hereafter." This, he told Scott, was "the tendency of your doctrine."[70] The premise behind Scott's worldview had been the supposition that the wicked prospered and the righteous suffered. Whittemore sought to invert that. Again, he was caught between the fundamentally traditional view that God was inherently just and would hold the wicked to account for their crimes and the more modernist, progressive notion of God as an amorphous force of love who would not condemn any person to future damnation. The result was a theology that embraced universal salvation but, because of Whittemore's belief in justice, had to find an acceptable time for justice to be done.

The only adequate point in time was the present. This essay made that implied but recurring argument from the earlier articles into an explicit one. Universalists, Whittemore reasoned, promoted morality and virtue in society because they taught that the wicked would suffer in this world and that the righteous would prosper. "They [Universalists] assert … that the way itself of transgressors is hard," he observed, "that sin is a disease which brings agony into all the moral system: that it is fire." For Whittemore, there was an "inseparable connexion between sin and misery." This argument had very practical implications. The "living witnesses to the truth" of Universalism, he wrote, included "the drunkdard, poor diseased, tattered, broken-down, forsaken" and "the liar, ... the gambler, ... the thief, ... [and] the murderer." Those who struggled

[70] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154.

with sin ranged from those who suffered from "misfortune" like the drunkard or the diseased to those who suffered from "criminality." In both categories, the punishment or result of sin was a temporal or materialistic one in the present world rather than one that could be adjudicated in a future state of existence. This model of morality, which promoted "the *real* consequences which attend vice in this life" did a far greater job to encourage moral virtue in society than "the doctrine of future punishment as held by the clergy generally." As a result, it was the Universalists and not the clergy class who stood as "the sentinels which guard public morals."[71]

Whittemore concluded his fourth essay with a measured admonition of "other denominations," who he insisted were beholden to "that species of pride which will never permit a man to confess he has been in the wrong." It was not a sincere difference of opinion, then, that divided Universalists and other Christians. Ego, he concluded, prevented traditional Christians from accepting the truth. That spirit stopped them from acknowledging that Universalists were the only denomination that understood "the real tendency of vice in this life...."[72]

Whittemore ended with a direct statement to Orange Scott: that although he was inclined to doubt Scott would ever give "a candid attention" to his replies, he still felt the debate between them had done "some good" for himself and the readers. Although he reiterated his belief that it allowed Universalists to better understand "the means our antagonists possess with which to oppose us," he also saw the potential benefits of the controversy. "It develops truth," he observed, adding that "my earnest prayer to God is that we may all be faithful servants of him who came into the world to 'bear witness unto *the truth*.'"[73] Although controversy over theology and principles inevitably demanded that one vision triumph, Whittemore's conclusion, whether

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[71] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154.
[72] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 154-155.
[73] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott.," 155.

well-intentioned or cynical, showed how the debate could realize its full potential. It did not need to be a denominational polemic or a condemnation of an amorphous clerical class. It could be an amicable discussion between people of different theological worldviews. With essays five and six remaining, there was still time for this vision of the debate to finally come to fruition.

The fourth essays had been illustrative precisely because they had allowed both men to arrive at the real heart of the debate between them and their respective theologies. While the Bible undoubtedly remained an important source of *proof* in that contest, it was the implications of their belief systems which had instigated the debate and given it such a contentious character. Both Scott's traditional theology and Whittemore's Universalism advocated radically different ways to promote virtue and cultivate a moral society. While they both expressly believed in the same end, the theological means they adopted to arrive at that shared end differed dramatically. They could both claim the mantle of virtue and challenge the other as a promoter of vice because the differences of their systems meant that they viewed a good, moral, and virtuous society differently. For Whittemore, it was the society that eschewed religious hierarchy and promoted the egalitarian message of a God that loved everyone equally. By showing people that God loved everyone and emphasizing the miserable effect of sin in the present world, he believed they could inculcate a more virtuous social fabric.

Scott arrived at the opposite conclusion, not only on human nature, but also on morality and the very nature of God. Free will made Whittemore's idealistic, utopian vision for human society fundamentally impossible. Moreover, Scott's view of justice required punishment to be inflicted on those who abused God's gift of freedom. His hypothetical examples across essays one, two, three, and four – the murderer, the despot, and even the slaver – were people who *could* escape human justice. And if they evaded human justice, then a just God had to hold them

accountable. The universal salvation of the paragon and evildoer alike suggested to him that one's personal actions had no consequence, that their free will – if they even had it – was meaningless. Moreover, Whittemore's repeated efforts to link worldly conditions in the present to one's status as saint or sinner only reinforced his objections to Universalism.

Scott's fifth essay was a scathing critique of Universalism in totality. It brought the threads of the debate to a climax and took the ideas that he had introduced in his earlier writings to their logical conclusion. It was important, he wrote, to examine the "practical tendency" of "any system of doctrines" to determine its connection to the Gospel as well as its "evangelical or unevangelical character." This required an examination into whether doctrines tended "to make men pious and good, or the contrary." This evaluative standard, then, required exploring the real-world effects of religion. In the same way some Christian theologians had argued faith and reason must coexist, Scott believed that a theological worldview must be both religiously correct and practically correct.[74]

Admittedly, this was "a delicate task" and one which Scott hoped would not "offend my fellow creatures." Responding directly to Whittemore's point about truth at the end of essay four, he replied, "while I am sensible what is due to those who differ from me in opinions…, I know also what is due to the cause of truth." Whittemore, he observed, had committed a "capital error" that needed to be set right. This required a detailed examination into the shortcomings of Universalism that composed the entirety of` his fifth essay.[75]

[74] O. Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," *Universalist Magazine*, March 31, 1827, vol. 8, no. 41, p. 161-163, ProQuest, American Periodicals. Thomas Aquinas and other Thomistic writers stressed the inherent compatibility between faith and reason, arguing that because God gave humans the ability to reason, he would not force them to believe something which did not make rational sense. Similarly, Scott argued that because God was the author of justice, he would not force people to adhere to a religious and theological framework that was fundamentally unjust.
[75] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.

First, Scott challenged Whittemore's assertions about love. Whittemore had contended that the correct way to evangelize was strictly by convincing people that God loved them. Conversely, Scott argued that the correct answer was not love, but a dichotomy of what he called "the fears and the hopes of men." While Whittemore feared that the doctrine of hell would only alienate people from God, Scott believed the inverse to be the true. While he considered "gratitude" – the human response to God's love – to be a "noble" trait, he did not believe that gratitude alone was sufficient to promote practical good. This must be understood in the context of his discussion of "the unregenerate." "Unregenerate" sinners and evildoers would not be swayed by gratitude for God's love. Instead, they required fear of God's wrath to act morally. "The most depraved among the children of men are capable of fearing the judgment of God," he wrote, arguing that it served as a far better motivator to spur people into a righteous lifestyle.[76]

For Scott, however, the message of the Bible was not one exclusively of wrath. It was a balance between love and fear, and both needed to be taken in moderation. His critique of Universalism, then, stemmed from his concern that it had strayed too far in the direction of the former and to the detriment of the latter. He wrote:

> The sentiment of some that fear has nothing to do in religion, that the gospel deals only in blessings and mercies is totally without foundation. The gospel has its conditions, precepts, threatenings and warnings as well as the law, and those of the most terrible description. … These admonitions and denunciations of wrath were designed to arrest the attention of the sinner, to awaken fear and lead from destructive ways of error and sin, and prepare him to accept salvation on the terms of grace.[77]

This excerpt is significant because it highlights the duality between mercy and wrath, faith and repentance, and gratitude and fear. Together these opposing forces worked in tandem to promote morality. Once awakened through fear, the sinners could enjoy hope and gratitude. The object of

[76] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.
[77] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.

the Gospel, then, was "to bring the sinner to the feet of the Saviour, and then inspire hope and confidence in the mind oppressed with guilt and fear." In essence, wrath and fear brought the sinner and the impenitent to the hope and mercy. Universalists had erred because they held that Christianity dealt "only" in the latter category. This, however, made the mistake twofold. It "destroys the motive taken from the justice of God" and "diminishes the importance of that taken from his mercy." In Scott's view, God's wrath was a result of his love. And by doing away with what was seen as God's cruelty in the form of his wrath, Scott argued the Universalists had essentially diminished the one thing their teachings sought to exalt. The practical consequences of this seemingly simple error were significant. By making the category of wrath "void," they had developed a theology which "opens the kingdom of heaven to the impenitent and unholy of every description."[78]

The implications were clear. Traditional Christianity, as Scott understood it, was a religion built on conversion, on people literally transforming into "a new creature, a spiritual man, a child of God." As such, he wrote, "your system supersedes the necessity of this change" because both the "righteous" and "unrighteous" would each "share the same felicity in that which is to come." Whittemore's theology gave people no incentive to do good and reject evil if they were inevitably going to be saved. "The sinner has therefore little or no motive to repent and lead a self-denied life," Scott observed. While he did not respond to Whittemore's death-bed confession critique, he presented the inverse of it as a means of challenging it. "He [the sinner] will be ready to say," he wrote of the hypothetical example, "If I can go to heaven without repentance and self-denial, I will not trouble myself about these things."[79]

[78] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.
[79] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.

But beyond simply altering the moral fabric of society, Scott argued that Universalism "changes the whole character of religion." In particular, he targeted what he considered to be the deficiencies of their theology on repentance and faith. Their views on the former, he wrote, marginalized "the nature and magnitude of sin" by treating it "as comparatively a very small evil." Scott expanded this argument in the fifth essay to better connect it with Whittemore's broader claims about justice in the present world. According to the Universalist conception of sin and punishment, "It [sin] is an evil connected with the present life only." Scott then decried this emphasis on temporal punishment for sin as insufficient. If sin was handled exclusively in the present world, then "divine law" had no role. Similarly, Universalist teaching on faith was "equally defective." In this case, Scott invoked Whittemore's previous suggestion that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ran contrary to his conception of a loving God. Universalism, Scott charged, had "nothing to do with atonement for sin by the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ." For Scott, Jesus' sacrifice was the cornerstone of the Christian faith. It redeemed a humanity that was "corrupt, ruined, lost, condemned, and exposed to everlasting death."[80]

By drawing this distinction, Scott again introduced a crucial issue that divided the two men: human nature. Scott, like most Methodists, accepted a doctrine of limited depravity. Given his pessimistic view of the natural state of humanity, humans needed a savior to redeem them. They could not redeem themselves because the world was so corrupted by the power of sin and evil. He believed humanity and the world could not be indefinitely improved or perfected because its fallen nature meant humans were inclined toward evil rather than virtue. This view differed with Whittemore's far more optimistic and utopian view of humanity, which saw people as generally good and felt they only needed a gentle hand to lead them towards God. Wesleyan

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[80] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.

Perfectionism, it should be noted, held that people could act in an altruistic or selfless manner, but this was an extraordinary, supernatural exception to the norm. As a result, Scott believed some external force needed to "inflame the heart with love to God" and "produce that feeling of gratitude which the reception of eternal salvation as the gift of God through Christ is designed to inspire." And all moral good in the present world, he argued, flowed from this love of God as a form of reciprocity for the love that God had shown his creation through the sacrifice of Jesus.[81] Implicit in this argument, then, was a rebuttal to Whittemore's earlier suggestion that Jesus' sacrifice was unnecessary. For Scott, Jesus' sacrifice was not a product of wrath or anger, but the ultimate expression of love. Nevertheless, Scott's theology ultimately required restraining the natural impulses of humanity more than it did on unshackling its latent capacity for goodness.

Scott, however, did not rest his case by simply seeking to prove that Universalism was ill-suited to the task of promoting moral virtue. Pressing his case further, he contended that it was a detriment for society that it made its adherents less moral. Echoing his belief in a theology of restraint, Scott observed that "the nature of depraved man" and "his appetites and passions" meant "he needs all the restraints of religion" as well as "barriers" between himself and sinful behavior. Whittemore, to the contrary, had developed a "system of doctrines … which entirely removes from a race of depraved beings the restraints of the gospel…." Sin was therefore the inevitable consequence of Universalist religious teachings. Without the barriers and regulations of traditional religion, a person's mind was left "unhinged … till it loses itself in the mazes of error and uncertainty."[82] True morality, then, relied not on leaving people to their own devices, but in constraining their worst impulses. In doing so, one could then tap into that inner capacity for goodness that people possessed through God's grace.

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[81] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161-162.
[82] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161-162.

This did not mean that every adherent to Universalism was immoral. “Many believers in it are moral men and hold a respective standing in society,” Scott clarified, but asked, “has Universalism done this?” Those specific individuals were good in spite of Universalism, not because of it. Other factors like education were responsible. To prove whether a theological framework was morally practical, it required looking not only at its saints but also its sinners. It was imperative to show that people from the latter group had been rescued from their moral failings specifically by the religious teachings of a denomination.[83]

Universalism failed this test. “Your doctrine banishes all serious concern from the minds of those who embrace it,” Scott argued, adding that its adherents inevitably “lost all concern about their future state.” It did this by replacing prayer, repentance, and fear of the world to come with the concerns of the present state of existence. In doing so, it transformed the character of its adherents and not in a good or moral way. “This unholy doctrine, like a besom of destruction,” he wrote, “has swept the whole aside, or mared and spoiled their character and tendency.” And this worldview, he observed, had an especially corrupting influence over the youth. Operating on the premise that the youth were not the most discerning in judgment and were liable to act on passion, he argued that they were uniquely susceptible to the worrying moral implications of Universalism. “They swallow it down as the silly fish does the baited hook,” he proclaimed, adding that it was easier to “pierce the scales of the *leviathan* as reach their consciences.”[84] If people needed restraints to act morally, that reality was even truer when it came to the youth who were still developing their consciences.

[83] Scott, “Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.,” 162.
[84] Scott, “Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.,” 162.

For Scott, this kind of Universalism could not be distinguished from Deism because "Deism and modern Universalism approximate each other in many of their essential points."[85] Beside sharing some overlap with respect to matters like gospel admonition and practical piety, he argued that they both wielded a corrupting influence on the youth. He then supplied two examples. The first anecdote, occurring "in the town of P---," involved a young woman who had recently converted to Universalism and, after only three weeks, had discarded her Bible. In the second case, a group of Universalist young men of that same town were observed as gathering for "smoking cigars and drinking freely," reveling in what Scott called "their unholy mirth." When a more "serious" person challenged them, the group laughed and retorted that he was "a d—d fool."[86]

The disagreement over the proper way to read and interpret the Bible had been evident in the debate since its inception. As Scott neared the conclusion of his fifth essay, he returned to this issue. Future judgment, future punishment, and traditional Christian teachings, he reiterated, were "expressed in the clearest and strongest language." Most significantly, however, he believed his self-evident scriptural exegesis and theology of restraint were the only solutions to humanity's moral limitations. The alternative was injustice. Under universal salvation, he argued, "it is impossible for you to say what the judgment of the wicked shall be." By unmooring themselves from "the literal meaning," the Universalists had essentially and inevitably unshackled themselves from the very idea that God was just.[87]

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[85] Scott's invocation here of "modern Universalism" is significant because this essay marked the first time where he distinguished between early Universalism and its modern incarnation. He called Origen, an early Christian thinker, "the first Universalist" but juxtaposed his ideas with the more modern Universalism outlined by "Mr. Winchester." Scott's argument hinged on Origen's more conservative Universalism being a "safe" belief rather than a certainty.
[86] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 162.
[87] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 162.

Remembering that he had nearly run out of space, Scott turned to a brief conclusion in which delved into "the temptation which this doctrine presents." And although he said that it "gives me no pleasure to mention this, as I know it will give offence," that subject was the case of suicide. This was not the first mention of suicide in the debate, as Scott had alluded to it in his third essay and Whittemore had discussed it in his fourth communication. In those essays, Scott had suggested suicide was proof of the necessity of future punishment since there could be no present punishment for suicide while Whittemore had rebutted that the act of suicide was itself the punishment. For Scott, however, suicide was the logical end to Universalist teaching. If the future world were better, then it made sense for one to seek the means to get there as quickly as possible. No person, he proclaimed, could find a single example of an intentional suicide in the entire history of "sound and rational christianity" that resulted from its teachings. Universalism, with its promises of guaranteed happiness in the future state, offered a "powerful, if not rational … temptation" for a person to commit suicide. He concluded this juncture of his argument with an assertion that it was imperative for Universalists to "[pay] more attention to this subject."[88]

Orange Scott ended his fifth essay with a brief paragraph about the parameters of the debate itself. He wrote to inform Whittemore that he had begun to draft a sixth essay, which he described as an article responding to Whittemore's first communication. However, this essay was "longer than I first thought" and would require double the length of his previous articles. That would have brought the length of his sixth essay to four pages: equal with the length of each of Whittemore's previous articles. He also suggested an expansion of their debate, in which he would publish rejoinder essays to Whittemore's other articles. But his offer also came with an ultimatum: he would not redraft his sixth essay. "If you will publish it on the original plan," he

[88] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.

wrote, "you shall have it as soon as I can get time to write it; if not, this number will close my present correspondence with you."[89]

The *Universalist Magazine* responded the following week. In a "Notice to Correspondents," the editor declared they would only adhere to their "original agreement" with Scott and that if he could not fit the spatial constraints of that agreement, then "it is not our fault." But the editor went further, noting that "we think he has constantly avoided the main point of difference" and "has filled our paper with mere trash." The editorship felt little desire to keep their columns "open" to him, and they surmised that "Mr. Scott has made his new proposal for the purpose of getting rid of the discussion as easily as possible."[90] These statements left little room for ambiguity. Scott had not only produced garbage that skirted the main argument; he only demanded new terms as an excuse to withdraw from a losing debate while retaining his credibility within the Methodist Episcopal Church.

On April 7, 1827, Thomas Whittemore published his fifth essay. But this was not a response to Orange Scott. Instead, it was a letter to the paper's readership. This change was deliberate. Whittemore expressly changed his audience for this final essay because "he [Scott] pays no attention to any thing I offer." Here Whittemore presented both a defense of his publication and a polemical rejoinder to Scott's fifth essay. On the first point, Whittemore said little that was new, reiterating the parameters of the debate and echoing his repeated accusations that Scott refused to engage his arguments or focus on the main topic of the debate. Whittemore, however, offered an even clearer examination into some the major ideas that he had articulated in his first four essays. He once again turned to his death-bed confession example to prove that

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[89] Scott, "Controversial. To the Rev. Thomas Whittemore. Essay No. V.," 161.
[90] "Notice to Correspondents.," *Universalist Magazine*, April 7, 1827, vol. 8, no. 42, p. 168, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

Methodists – and other Christian denominations by proxy – were influenced by "an evil tendency" because they offered the wicked the ability to "escape punishment."[91] He then alleged that Scott was "ignorant" or "destitute of shame and sincerity" and even likened him to "the false prophets of Israel."[92]

Moreover, as Whittemore reached the culmination of his final article, he turned his sights once more to the clergy class he had repeatedly deprecated. He took aim at Scott's examples of the young woman and the drunken young men, calling these anecdotes "trash." He then endeavored to show that one of the stories that Scott used had appeared in William Collier's *National Philanthropist*, and that it was a story that had allegedly been debunked as "false."[93] Repeating an untrue story, however, was not just an innocent error on Scott's part. It was reflective of the broader ambitions of the clergy class, who sought to control the masses and raise money from them.[94] The clergy, Whittemore asserted, were the ones who promoted vice in society by the practice of "profane swearing" and by speaking "upon such subjects as to vitiate the public mind." These clergymen, embodied in the personage of Orange Scott, were the "Pharisees of the present age." Scott, then, was a clear manifestation of "the real spirit of the Pharisee." Hypocrisy was just one of their many crimes. Whittemore concluded his article by echoing an argument he had posited in his previous essays: that the clergy class *wanted* an eternal damnation to be true because of their pride and arrogance. "How eager must a man be to

[91] Whittemore buttressed this example with the hypothetical case of a murderer who killed a moral man. The moral man went to hell while the clergy got the murderer into heaven by persuading him to make a profession of faith before his execution.
[92] Thomas Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Essay No. V.," *Universalist Magazine*, April 7, 1827, vol. 8, no. 42. p. 165-166, ProQuest, American Periodicals.
[93] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Essay No. V.," 166n. Whittemore attached a lengthy footnote to his essay which challenged some details in the *National Philanthropist* account, such as a bell mentioned in the story allegedly not existing in the actual place.
[94] In this essay Whittemore suggested that the aforementioned *National Philanthropist* article had been written by a clergymen who wanted an excuse "to suppress intemperance" while the clergy as a group exploited fear of damnation as a means to have money "drawn out of the community by missionary beggars."

prove the endless misery of his fellow men," he observed, adding that "God is able, unquestionably to save all mankind."[95] Although Whittemore accused Scott of hatred for his fellow humans and castigated him for his perceived inconsistency, he nonetheless revealed a significant distinction between their theologies in his concluding sentences: that he saw free will and conditional salvation as placing limitations on God. In doing so, however, Whittemore inadvertently raised several theological questions that could have sustained and expanded the controversy between the two men.

Did God condemn sinners to damnation, or did they condemn themselves? Did the notion of free will limit God's power, since, as Whittemore suggested, he manifestly had the power to save the entirety of humanity? It raised implications about the inverse too. Did the notion of universal salvation in the future state place limitations on God's justice? These questions, alongside others, never received the resolution they perhaps deserved. Instead, the debate came to an inglorious and premature end, and one in which both sides were eager to claim victory.[96]

The discussion between Orange Scott and Thomas Whittemore across the ten essays they wrote hinged upon four main issues. These issues – the proper way to read the Bible, the notion of free will, conditional salvation versus universal salvation, and the best means to promote morality – bitterly divided them. Discussion of these points exposed stark, irreconcilable divisions between them and their respective worldviews. These points of contention did not only provide insight into the distinctions between Methodism and Universalism during the Second Great Awakening and the early years of the American republic. They also provided a window into Scott's worldview during his early years of the ministry and illustrated the spiritual foundation upon which he would build his attitudes towards reform.

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[95] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Essay No. V.," 166-167.
[96] Whittemore, "Controversial.: Reply to Rev. Mr. Scott. Essay No. V.," 165-166.

These debates reveal that Scott held a traditional Christian theology of a Methodist stamp. Although some of his views, as Whittemore was eager to point out, differed from the mainstream of his denomination, Scott certainly saw his theology as conservative. And in defense of his more traditional theology, he invoked a fundamentally Burkean argument by challenging Whittemore's radical, theoretical "system" that he feared would remake human society and the very tenets of Christianity itself. This was a constrained theology which advocated a conservative vision for society more broadly. In that sense, Scott is a historical testament to the fact that many of the crusaders against social evils like slavery were not strictly those of more progressive theological leanings. The ranks of reform were buttressed by the theologically conservative, those who read the Bible as divine truth rather than inspired allegory.

The Scott-Whittemore debate further revealed that this theology did not simply revolve around a simplistic "literal versus allegorical" dichotomy. The reality was far more complicated. Scott read some passages literally, while he viewed others as metaphorical or symbolic. And similarly, Whittemore occasionally employed a strict construction of the Bible, deprecating certain ideas if their exact verbiage did not appear in the text. For Scott, this was a matter of simply interpreting the plain text of the Bible based on what he considered to be its self-evident meaning. Although these debates demonstrated that he could be a capable and even nuanced thinker, he did not show the same interest in the scholarly elements of the debate that Whittemore had shown. He was, simply put, a popular preacher who approached these theological questions from the premise that the message of the Bible was clear and obvious so that it could be easily understood and communicated to ordinary people. As a result, Scott's apology for traditional theology offers further complexity and insight into the divisions between

radical and conservative Christians, especially regarding how to properly read and interpret the Bible.

But this controversy further demonstrated two important and interconnected elements of Orange Scott's worldview that foreshadowed his future actions as a minister and a reformer. First, he believed that a just cosmic order required future judgment to hold the wicked accountable for their crimes. The tyrant, the murderer, and even the slaver could prosper. They did not deserve to do so, but Scott opposed the logical byproduct of Whittemore's argument that a person's prosperity or suffering in the present world reflected their status as saint or sinner. To make that argument would be to suggest that these hypothetical individuals were virtuous or that God had deigned their actions as not being worthy of punishment. It made Scott aware of the fact that evil could reside in high places and reinforced some of his populist tendencies.

Second, he, unlike Whittemore, believed that all humans possessed free will. That concept always made reform a possibility because humans could be guided down a better path through the power of religion. While people needed to be stopped from committing moral evil, they could also be persuaded to accept moral good in the same way they could convert to Christianity. This gave Scott an enduring optimism in the power of persuasion and cemented his longstanding belief that he could persuade others of the error of their ways. It also proved the inverse to be true: that actions needed to be taken to stop evil wherever it emerged by putting "restraints" on such behavior. This dual concept of repentance and restraint was an integral element of Scott's reform mentality and was deeply rooted in his theological worldview. But the concept of restraints, or barriers, remains essential to understanding this overarching moral framework. Scott adhered to the concept of ordered liberty, the idea that liberty required moral restraints to be fully realized. The specter of future punishment acted as the guardrail that could

check people's temptations to sin, their natural inclination to turn liberty into license, and their willingness to usurp the rights of other humans. Freedom and limitation, then, went hand-in-hand. Turning from his public debate with Whittemore and back to his ministry, Scott would increasingly champion this framework in word and deed. How he took his theology and carried it into society more broadly is the subject of the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4: Presiding Elder Orange Scott, 1826-1835

On May 7, 1826, in Lyndon, Vermont, Orange Scott, nearing the conclusion of his first year stationed in Charlestown, married Amey Fletcher. Their marriage came after a yearlong courtship and marked the culmination of what she called "an interesting correspondence." Orange and Amey Scott were an ideal match; both were brought to the Methodist Episcopal Church by the revivals sweeping across New England and upstate New York during the 1810s and 1820s. And both saw themselves and one another as laborers in the same crusade of evangelization. She favorably described him in her diary as "a successful minister of the Gospel," while he later reflected that "the person whom Providence led me to select as my companion … I found to be well qualified for the task, and one of the choicest spirits."[1]

The new couple stayed in Lyndon for the week after their marriage to spend time with their families and their mutual friends, which Amey Scott described as a "pleasure." But for her, however, this moment in her life was also a bittersweet occasion, as her marriage to Orange Scott also meant bidding farewell to family and friends. She expressed anxiety in her diary at the time, confessing that "I experienced the painful sensations of leaving my dear relatives" before she implored God to "prepare us to meet at his right hand."[2] The marriage marked a new chapter in both their lives, one with many highs and lows over the following decade.

This chapter narrates and analyzes Orange Scott's life from 1826 to 1835, which proved to be a crucial period for him both personally and professionally. These years were shaped by his marriage to Amey Scott and his continued rise through the Methodist Episcopal Church's

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[1] Amey Fletcher Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott: Written by Herself* (Lowell, Massachusetts: E.A. Rice and Co., 1840), 30-31; Orange Scott and Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott Complied from His Personal Narrative, Correspondence, And Other Authentic Sources of Information* (New York: C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack, at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1847), 17-18.
[2] Amey Fletcher Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 31.

hierarchy, a vocation which his wife enthusiastically supported. Amey Scott proved indispensable. She did not simply endorse her husband's work in the ministry; she labored alongside him as an active participant in the work of evangelization and even occasionally took on a public role in it. She was a co-laborer in the same religious work because she had been forged by the same religious sentiment that animated him. Meanwhile, Orange Scott continued to grow in popularity with church members and leading Methodist authorities as he traversed across the New England states until he had achieved his high watermark of power and influence within the church.

Given the role that she played in Orange Scott's life during these years, it is first important to offer a brief portrait of Amey Scott. Amey (nee Fletcher) Scott was born in Lyndon, a town in eastern Vermont, on September 21, 1805, to Alpheus and Ruthy Fletcher.[3] Few specifics are known of her childhood outside of those recorded in her memoirs, which she began writing in 1824.[4] When reflecting on her early years, she observed that she felt herself "inclined to evil," until she began to experience the influence of religion when she was eleven years old. This left her resolved to "serve the Lord." She attended class meetings in her teenage years but slowly began to drift away from religion once more. "Prayer became a task and a burden," she lamented, adding that she began to "shun" her friends in favor of what she termed "giddy dance," "vain amusements" and "gay and thoughtless company." This "vanity," however, did not bring

[3] Orange Scott, "Mrs. Amey Scott.," in *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott: Written by Herself* (Lowell, Massachusetts: E.A. Rice and Co., 1840), 100.
[4] Amey Scott's memoirs are an important work because they provide one of the only sources of biographical information about her. However, it is important to note some deficiencies with the work. She began writing her memoirs in 1824, roughly a year after her conversion to Christianity. This clearly colors her recollection of past events. Secondly, Orange Scott published her memoirs and acted as an editor, going so far as to explain in the preface that some of it had been "re-written." However, his preface assures readers that "the language of the author [Amey Scott] has been, in almost every instance, preserved" and that the changes encompassed only changing "a word" or omitting "part of a sentence." He promised readers, "in general, the work is just as she left it" and "it was thought best that she should utter her own thoughts in her own language." See Orange Scott, "Preface.," *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott* (Lowell, Massachusetts: E.A. Rice and Co., 1840), iii.

her "real happiness." Nevertheless, even as she became aware that she "was going contrary to the commands of a holy and just God," she "still went on in sin and rebellion."[5]

This changed during the winter of 1822-1823, when she was seventeen years old. During these months, Amey Fletcher privately resolved that she would answer the God who was "still calling after me." However, this resolution did not bring her joy and instead caused her to suffer from feelings of guilt, anxiety, and unworthiness which she would struggle with for the rest of her life. "All appeared gloomy around me," she reflected, saying that she feared death because she felt her shortcomings meant she would face "the wrath of God" and thereafter "dwell in everlasting burnings." She suffered from a lack of sleep, nightmares, and anxiety until she decided that she could no longer continue. In short, she found herself in a position like that of her future husband: someone apart from religion who nonetheless believed that the vengeance of a just God hung over them. Fletcher's fear of God's wrath had made her miserable, and she realized that she needed religion in her life since "nothing else could make me happy."[6]

Amey Fletcher finally converted to evangelical Christianity during a camp-meeting in Cabot, Vermont in September 1823. She and two of her sisters were baptized by Rev. John F. Adams, one of the Methodist ministers on the station and a man with a close working relationship with Fletcher's future husband. This helped bring her a sense of peace over her earlier spiritual anxiety, and she then observed that the "burden was gone." She soon felt great relief. "For several weeks my soul was measurably happy in God," she recounted.[7] However, these reprieves were always short-lived. For Amy Fletcher, religion served as a double-edged

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[5] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 5-7.
[6] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 7-9.
[7] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 79, 10-11.

sword; it was a source of sadness and despair for her that was simultaneously balanced by her strong sense of hope in its promise of redemption.

Even as she grew more involved in religious life, she continued to struggle with anxiety and doubt, waxing and waning between poles of joy and misery. She spoke frequently of a lack of "confidence" in herself, and the "doubts" which she experienced regarding religion. And by acquiescing to her doubts, she fell deeper into despair, becoming more convinced that she had put herself beyond the possibility of redemption. This stemmed primarily from viewing herself as a "backslider," a Christian who had fallen away from their faith after pledging themselves to God. "I feared I had committed … a sin which would not be forgiven," she fretted. She continued to look for answers to this spiritual dilemma, opting to read John Wesley's "A Call to Backsliders," which she said offered her "a small degree of peace."[8] But she recounted whenever she put the book down, "the enemy would again destroy my peace."[9]

It was Fletcher's friends that helped her through this difficult time in her life. Women like "beloved sister" Laura McGaffy identified the struggle Fletcher faced and offered her "momentary" hope and encouragement. And as Fletcher watched many of her other friends convert to Christianity, she felt her own doubts subside. This trend continued during the remainder of 1824. When she returned to her "happy neighborhood" in the winter after attending school in Lisbon, New Hampshire during the summer, she recorded the first evidence in her

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[8] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 11-13. John Wesley's 1778 sermon, "A Call to Backsliders" was designed to provide hope to those who considered themselves "backsliders." In particular, he spoke of those who "perish" as a result of "despair," referring to those who suffered from "want of hope" and believed that "it impossible that they should escape destruction." Wesley concluded that he could not "give up" on them. See John Wesley, "A Call to Backsliders," https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=6159 (accessed May 4, 2022)
[9] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 11.

diary of a meeting with Orange Scott. "Heard bro. Scott preach a very solemn and interesting discourse," she wrote about a religious gathering in Lyndon that inaugurated the new year.[10]

Over the next several months, Fletcher struggled with her health and again found herself in "a very dark time." These spiritual and emotional struggles increasingly stemmed from a belief that her poor health and bodily sufferings were a result of her sin and evidence that she had not fully put her trust in God.[11] This became one of the defining characteristics of her life, and many of the actions she later undertook as a wife, a mother, and an evangelizer stemmed from her desire to prove that she was faithful to God.

Sometime during this existential crisis of faith, Fletcher began corresponding with Orange Scott. Whether or not she reached out to him because of her spiritual concerns remains unclear. Given that he was a preacher stationed to help oversee her town, it would have made sense for him to serve as a spiritual adviser. However, regardless of how this correspondence began, it eventually turned personal. On July 29, 1825, Fletcher recorded in her diary that she had received a letter from "bro. O.S.," the first direct evidence of one of these letters between them. This letter dealt primarily with his ministerial work, and Fletcher wrote that she could "rejoice to hear that he is steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." This letter indicates that their correspondence had, by July 1825, taken on a personal nature. The two continued to correspond until their marriage on May 7, 1826.[12]

Orange and Amey Scott arrived in Charlestown, Massachusetts by the end of May 1826. Although Amey Scott had been saddened to be "about two hundred miles from most of my relatives," she observed that "I find here many affectionate and devoted friends." Upon their

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[10] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 13-16. This account aligns with the time when Orange Scott was stationed on the Lyndon Circuit.
[11] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 17-18.
[12] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 19, 31.

arrival, members of Orange Scott's church embraced her as a part of their Methodist community. These "kind friends," Amey Scott observed, "appear anxious to make me happy." She spent her time in Charlestown by "daily visiting and forming new acquaintances" but felt her "unfaithfulness" meant that her "visits" across the station were "not so profitable as they might be." She therefore embraced the role of being a preacher's wife but did not play this part passively. She sought to actively support her husband's ministerial work and viewed every time she was in public as an opportunity to help effectuate conversions and evangelization. She also went to prayer and class meetings, interacting with church members and observing that she found "my heart united with the people of this place."[13]

In the first days of June 1826, about a week after the newly married couple's arrival in Charlestown, Orange Scott left for the annual meeting of the New England Conference that was to be held in Wilbraham, Massachusetts. The conference was significant because it would address whether Scott returned to Charlestown for another conference year or if he and his wife would be assigned elsewhere.[14] If the decision to put Orange Scott on the Charlestown station in

[13] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 31. Class meetings dated back to John Wesley, but Methodists considered the practice to be part of a longer tradition of what the *Methodist Magazine* called "an excellent mode of christian fellowship" that had, by 1814, "survived the test of more than seventy years has proved to be admirably adapted to the grand ends of instruction, edification, and discipline." According to Thomas Martin, who wrote a short pamphlet on them, these meetings were small groups of Methodists divided by "age, sex, or state of experience" and were led by a leader who possessed the ability and moral character to guide members. In his *Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, Wesley described them as "smaller Companies" organized on the bases of sex and marital status. These groups met once a week, opened with singing or prayer, and discussed personal spiritual journeys. This included conversing on "the true State of our Soul, with the Faults we have committed ..., and the Temptations we have felt since our last Meeting:" For more on class meetings, see "Review of 'Thoughts on the Nature and Advantages of Class-meeting; as adopted in the Methodist Societies: Including an Account of the Origin, Authority, and general Oconomy of that Institution: intended to explain and recommend it to whomsoever it may concern. By Thomas Martin.,'" *Methodist Magazine*, 1813, vol. 37, p. 912-916, ProQuest (accessed January 16, 2023); Thomas Martin, *Thoughts on the Nature and Advantages of Class-Meetings* (London: Printed at the Conference Office of Thomas Cordeaux, 1813), p. 1-35; John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists. In a Letter to the Revd. Mr. Perronet* (London: Printed by W. Strahan, 1749), 10-12, 16-17.
[14] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott,* 31-32. Orange Scott left in the first days of June, likely June 3, because Amey Scott noted on June 10 in her diary that "It is now about one week since Mr. Scott left town for conference." Given her use of "about," however, it could have easily been with a day or two of that June 3 date.

the first place had been a test to gauge his future in the church hierarchy, his renewal or reassignment would be the church's verdict on his performance.

Orange Scott passed that test. At the Wilbraham Conference, the church ordained him an elder and renewed his assignment. When he returned on June 16 with the news, Amey Scott expressed hope that it would lead to "a year of prosperity to the church in this place."[15] Orange Scott also observed that his wife was personally happy with residing in Charlestown, likely due to the friendships she had made at prayer meetings. He noted in his memoirs that staying in Charlestown had been "quite agreeable to me, to my wife and the people."[16]

Scott largely found the 1826-1827 conference year to be an uneventful one. He estimated that they added approximately fifteen or twenty members to the Methodist Episcopal Church, numbers which paled in contrast with his experiences laboring on more rural circuits. Working on an urban station, however, afforded him more free time since he did not need to travel as much. "I had a good opportunity for study, and I trust made some further improvement in preaching," he recalled. Instead of adding new members to the church, the station provided the Scotts with the opportunity to cultivate a close bond with the already established Methodist community under their care. "We formed many strong attachments and pleasant associations," he observed of his time on that station.[17] Some of these friendships would endure for years.

Scott found his time in Charlestown to be uneventful largely because he felt most at home and most comfortable when actively pushing for conversions. This remained a key element of his personality from his early years in itinerancy to his later crusade for abolitionism. His

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[15] Orange Scott *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 32-33. Amey Scott did not shy away from voicing discontent with church appointments, and since she did not express unhappiness with Charlestown, it stands to reason that Scott's assessment that it was "agreeable" to her was accurate. See Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 54-55.
[16] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18.
[17] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18.

accounts of ministerial work always revolved around the raw numbers of converts. Moving to a more settled environment entailed new challenges that did not necessarily align with his temperament for revival. He had found the Methodist community in Charlestown to be in a largely comfortable and harmonious state and felt there were few opportunities to promote conversion outside of his debate with the Universalists.

His own personal thoughts notwithstanding, his time in Charlestown was anything other than uneventful or fruitless. Although Scott used conversions as a metric for activity and success, his service to the church, his defense of traditionalist theology from Universalism, and his stewardship of a coveted station, earned him support within the church hierarchy. As evidenced by his renewed assignment to that prestigious appointment, his superiors believed he had done a satisfactory job. Moreover, Seth Sprague, Jr., one of Orange Scott's acquaintances during and after his time in Charlestown, wrote in 1843 that he was "eminently successful" and that "His character for piety, zeal and ability, seemed to take wing and spread in every direction."[18] Sprague further recounted an episode from Scott's time in Charlestown that offers a window into his personality and temperament:

> It was during his labors in Charlestown, that I first knew him. He made us a visit on some Quarterly Meeting, or like occasion, and while at my house, we had some conversation on the subject of Episcopacy, he taking the side of the Bishops in opposition to myself. During the discussion, I made a remark which he very strenuously denied. I dropped the subject, as we were both getting a little heated. He returned to Charlestown, and I thought no more of the matter until it was brought to my mind a few months laterwards, by a letter from Br. Scott, in which he stated that he had become satisfied of his error..., and wished to make acknowledgement of his error as readily and freely as he had been to defend what he thought was true.[19]

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[18] Seth Sprague, Jr., quoted in Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott Compiled from His Correspondence and Other Authentic Sources. In Two Parts.* (New York: Published by C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room No. 5 Spruce Street, 1848), 62.
[19] Seth Sprague, Jr., quoted in Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 62-63.

For Sprague, this “little affair” gave him a “favorable impression” of Scott because it showed him to be “ardent and zealous in defence of truth, yet ready to retract and acknowledge when convinced he had been in the wrong.” He was “honest in his opinion, and a candid inquirer after truth.”[20]

This anecdote not only ably summarized Scott’s tenure as a Methodist minister in Charlestown; it describes much of his role in public debates over issues like Universalism, slavery, non-resistance, and church government. Scott was aggressive in defending what he believed to be correct principles and he would ardently advocate for them; but he was always open to be persuaded in the same way that he sought to persuade. In his role as a public figure, he never dismissed another person’s principles even when he strenuously disagreed. He instead wished to debate them. He conducted himself in this way during his controversy with Thomas Whittemore over Universalism, and he behaved in a very similar manner with Seth Sprague over the power of bishops. Being stationed in Charlestown afforded him the opportunity to learn the lessons of public argumentation that would continue to serve him as his prominence grew.

S.G. Coggeshall, a Methodist minister, reflected in 1872 that he had first met Orange Scott during Scott’s time in Charlestown. Coggeshall’s account of their first meeting offers insight into the type of minister he had become. Coggeshall wrote:

> O. Scott was a most unforgettable man. I first saw him in the pulpit of the old Sewall Street Church, in Salem ... when I was a boy. Some men are so perfectly commonplace, that you may see them almost any number of times, and never remember them. But I shall never forget Brother Scott as he then appeared in the pulpit. In the evening, at the close of the sermon, as was then sometimes the custom, he sang a hymn, a mighty sermon of itself. It went through and through me, and ‘the thoughts of my heart were revealed.’ Though I have ever been on the lookout for it, I have never since heard it, in

[20] Seth Sprague, Jr., quoted in Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 63.

> the whole range of Wesleyan hymology. I would give much to see it. Two years after, I turned to God, and lived.[21]

This effusive account illustrates the lasting influence Scott had upon the people he met. Coggeshall's description of his sermon and subsequent hymn are characterized by their fundamentally emotional sentiment to the point where he yearned to replicate that *feeling* nearly fifty years later. This stemmed from Scott's talent as a communicator, first through the spoken word and, eventually, through his penmanship. During his ministerial work, as both an evangelical preacher and a philanthropic reformer, Scott excelled at tapping into that inner spirit and channeling it towards emotional religious faith.

To save on expenses, the Scotts "boarded out" for the 1826-1827 conference year in Charlestown. While the historical record does not reveal the identity of their hosts, Amey Scott's diary suggests the couple had a relatively amicable relationship with them, observing on one occasion that they would pray together.[22] For his part, Scott framed the arrangement merely as a transactional one which allowed him and his wife to be "free from the cares of a household."[23] He spent that fall going to camp meetings and continuing to fulfill his responsibilities as a preacher stationed to a specific community by delivering sermons and meeting with church members. In August, he traveled across what Amey Scott described as "about one hundred miles across a branch of ocean" to attend a camp meeting in Truro, Massachusetts, a small town located on the tip of Cape Cod.[24] The couple had planned to go together but Amey Scott, growing up in landlocked Vermont, declined to attend at the last minute. After his return to

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[21] Rev. S.W. Coggeshall, D.D., "ORANGE SCOTT," *Zion's Herald*, April 11, 1872, vol. 49, no. 15, p. 170, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).

[22] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 39.

[23] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18.

[24] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 33. For demographic information on Truro, Massachusetts, see 1820 US Census; Census Place: Truro, Barnstable, Massachusetts; Page 229; NARA Roll: M33_47; Image: 133, United States Federal Census, accessed through AncestryLibrary (accessed June 10, 2022). In 1820, Truro had 1,268 residents, with roughly one in five residents working in a what was explicitly labeled "commerce."

Charlestown, Orange Scott fell ill to the point where he could not preach for two weeks but recovered in time to travel to a camp meeting in Rochester, New Hampshire at the end of September. The Rochester camp meeting would mark the first of many camp meetings that Orange and Amey Scott attended together.[25]

The time on the Charlestown station further proved to be an opportunity for both Orange Scott and his wife to explore their shared faith and refine it. Amey Scott spent that fall and winter attending prayer and class meetings as well as studying works such as William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. This period led her to pen a series of New Years' resolutions which she hoped would "stimulate me to greater faithfulness and activity in divine life." Of particular note was her resolution to "endeavor to do something towards destroying the kingdom of satan, and building up the kingdom of Christ."[26] This then led her to embrace an increasingly philanthropic spirit. Although she often was focused on the metaphysical and the spiritual, this call carried with it temporal considerations. For much of her life, Amey Scott saw good works as an outward manifestation of a person's faith, and she endeavored to do as much good for others as possible.

Amey Scott, then, spent a great deal of her time and energy in both the religious and philanthropic dimensions of her husband's ministry. Orange Scott, writing several years later to Benjamin Kingsbury, the editor of the *Zion's Herald*, praised his wife's "large share of Christian sympathy and the milk of human kindness" and noted:

> In my excellent companion, the poor found a faithful and constant friend. She was always ready, to the extent of her ability, to minister to their wants; and that she might be the better able to do this, she used the most rigid economy in all her expenses. From choice, her wearing apparel was plain, as well as cheap. After her conversion to God, she had no

[25] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 33-35.
[26] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 36-39, 41.

> taste for dress. Her 'adorning' was such as 'becometh women professing godliness' – viz: 'good works.'[27]

However, Amey Scott never limited her philanthropy to the material needs of the less fortunate. As Orange Scott noted, she had a "peculiar gift" to "strengthen and encourage the sorrowful" and the "tried, tempted, disconsolate, and afflicted." "She was always ready to listen to the tale of woe," he observed, adding that she had "an ear to hear, a heart to feel, and a disposition to relieve."[28] This disposition not only served her well as the wife of a Methodist minister; it also enabled her to fulfill her self-imposed obligation to carry out good works and encourage conversions. She evaluated every action in her life, no matter how small, through that prism.

Orange Scott also continued to make the most of his time in Charlestown. Offering a window into his preaching style while stationed there, Amey Scott briefly summarized one sermon he delivered on February 4, 1827. His sermon, derived from 1 Kings 18:44, pertained to the aftermath of a struggle between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal. After emerging victorious, Elijah and his allies waited for rain to be sent from God. At first, there was nothing. Eventually, however, a little cloud emerged and produced a "great rain." The significance of this story was not lost on Amey Scott, nor was her husband's reason for preaching it. "This subject seems to be applicable to our present condition," she wrote, "The Lord has converted a few among us of late, and more are inquiring the way to Zion."[29] 1 Kings 18:44-46 is the story of great results having simple beginnings. That was the point of Orange Scott's sermon, as applied to the state of the church in Charlestown. This introduces several themes that characterize his sermons more generally: his preeminent focus on conversion, his emphasis on bringing people to

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[27] Orange Scott, "Mrs. Amey Scott," in the *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 105-106. Scott's statement ends with an invocation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, in which St. Paul described how the ideal Christian woman should act.
[28] Scott, "Mrs. Amey Scott," in *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 105.
[29] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 41.

God to promote their speedy repentance, his ability to weave hope and fear together in a way that could inspire listeners, and his skill at taking the Bible and making it applicable to the present circumstances of the audience.

This sermon embodied all four components. It focused on the state of the church in Charlestown specifically. His message sought to inspire hope; even if growth had been small, it promised that a great rain of conversions would eventually come if members kept the faith. It told a story built around the defeat of the servants of Baal, reminding listeners of the fate of those outside the grace of God. And by linking the historic struggles of Elijah with their efforts to promote revival in Boston and its surrounding townships, Scott inevitably drew a connection between his audience and the ancient Israelites. For Scott, past, present, and future often converged and much of his rhetoric challenged listeners and readers to turn away from the shortcomings of the present and back to the virtues of the past.

On April 4, 1827, Orange and Amey Scott's lives were forever transformed when they welcomed their first child, Charles, into the world. And only a few short weeks later, their lives would be uprooted once again. At the New England annual conference, Orange Scott was assigned to a brand-new station at Lancaster, New Hampshire, a town in northwestern New Hampshire near the border with Vermont. Both Orange and Amey Scott approved of this appointment. Orange Scott felt the assignment would help improve his failing health and he recalled that he had been "anxious to get out into the country."[30] Amey Scott, on the other hand, endorsed it because of the new station's proximity to her hometown of Lyndon, Vermont.[31]

The couple, along with "little son" Charles, departed Charlestown for good on May 28, 1827, and arrived at Alpheus Scott's house in Lyndon after what Amey Scott called "a pleasant,

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[30] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 41-42. Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18

[31] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 41-42.

but fatigueing journey." The time in Lyndon was especially beneficial to Amey Scott, affording her the chance to meet with her family and her childhood friends. In particular, she singled out "my beloved L. [Laura McGaffy]" among the friends whom she "rejoiced greatly to meet."[32] While Amey Scott made the most of her time in Lyndon, her occasional use of "we" to refer to meeting "our friends" suggests that the trip was beneficial to Orange Scott as well and enabled him to meet with their mutual friends in that part of Vermont.

Circumstances were dramatically different for the Scotts in Lancaster than they were in Charlestown. Beyond giving them the chance to get out of the city, the couple also had their own residence and no longer had to board out. While Orange Scott had looked favorably on the conveniences of their arrangement in Charlestown, his wife preferred "the privilege of keeping house" despite the "additional cares" that came with it. Nevertheless, Orange Scott recollected that he felt he received "ample" support from the people in Lancaster and that his annual salary of $275 met his family's needs.[33]

Amey Scott's initial impression of the Lancaster station upon their arrival, however, was unfavorable. "When we came here," she lamented on October 12, 1827, "the state of religion was low." Her husband shared a similar view but saw the Lancaster assignment as one theater in a larger spiritual war for the hearts and minds of the American people. "For several years past the state of religion has been very low amongst all denominations of Christians," he wrote during his

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[32] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 42. The identity of "L." is Laura McGaffy, Amey Scott's childhood friend and the woman who helped her spiritual journey earlier in her life. Amey Scott lists McGaffy's husband as Rev. N.W. Aspenwall, a travelling preacher in Vermont. The death certificate of John Aspenwall, N.W. Aspenwall's son, lists "Laura Aspenwall" as his mother. New England Historic Genealogical Society; Boston, Massachusetts; State of Vermont. Vermont Vital Records through 1870. Ancestry.com. *Vermont, U.S., Vital Records, 1720-1908* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013. (accessed June 10, 2022). There is also a marriage certificate of a "Laura McGaffey" to a "Rev. Nathaniel W. Aspenwall" that took place on November 19, 1826 in Lyndon, Vermont. See Vermont Vital Records, 1720-1908, accessed through Ancestry (accessed June 10, 2022).

[33] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 43. Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 20.

time in Lancaster. Scott, however, believed the tide was finally beginning to turn in the final years of the decade. “The scene is changed,” he wrote optimistically, hoping that “The powers of darkness give place to the general light of the Sun of Righteousness” and the inauguration of an “auspicious era, when Holiness to the Lord, shall be the motto of all nations, and kingdoms, and tongues, and people.”[34] Scott’s assertions characterized the essence of his worldview. He believed the world could only be improved through religious revivals and the moral sentiment that they inculcated. Although not millenarian nor utopian, Scott shared Wesley’s understanding of Christian perfectionism and believed that spiritual growth could produce temporal improvement. His catholic, ecumenical disposition remained deeply connected with this attitude. This perspective – that the different denominations of Christianity stood united in common cause – characterized his view of revival and reform. It should be noted that Scott lamented the earlier troubles which “all denominations of Christians” faced. That Baptists and Congregationalists struggled was as lamentable to him as the struggles of the Methodists. And he sought to promote a religious message that could unite all peoples, cultures, and nations under the banner of a common Christianity.

While Scott in 1827 found the situation in Lancaster to be daunting, he nevertheless saw the good in the people under his care. The state of religion may have been “low,” but that did not mean it needed to remain that way. The situation could improve because the people were willing to improve. “The people were not, generally, gospel-hardened,” he later recalled, noting that the town was predominately Congregationalist at the time of his arrival but composed of a people who were “kind-hearted” and sympathetic.[35] They simply needed preaching that could galvanize

[34] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 43. O. Scott, “Lancaster, N.H.,” *Zion’s Herald*, December 5, 1827, vol. 5, no. 49, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022).
[35] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 18-19.

that sense of religious urgency that already existed within them. For him, the situation was an ideal one for Methodist evangelization.

Orange Scott first sought to build up his new station by preaching across denominational lines. Operating from the Presbyterian Town Meeting House, Scott did not simply preach to the handful of Methodists in Lancaster. He also reached out to the town's Baptists and Congregationalists and invited them to attend his sermons. Scott, however, attributed his success to the death of Lancaster's longtime Congregational minister, which had left a vacuum in the community. He later surmised that this had made the people "ripe for a change."[36]

In mid-September, only a few months after arriving in Lancaster, Scott organized a camp meeting at Guildhall, Vermont, a small town just a couple miles across the Connecticut River. Amey Scott viewed the event as a turning point; she said it "has been instrumental of good" and wrote that Orange Scott won seventy converts. Scott himself estimated the number to be between sixty and seventy but instead saw his endeavors as a "gradually increasing" prosperity, a sentiment that echoed Amey Scott's observation that the Methodist "praying army" continued to grow over time.[37] As an example of the disposition of some of residents won over by Scott's preaching, one family named a son after Orange Scott.[38] By November, Scott boasted to the *Zion's Herald* that "We have at present a very gracious revival of religion on this circuit."[39]

In the opening weeks of 1828, Amey Scott continued to take on an even more active role in her husband's work by participating in the first of many "female prayer meetings" which she

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[36] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 19.
[37] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 19. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 43
[38] "Obituaries," *Zion's Herald*, January 26, 1898, vol. 76, no. 4, p. 126, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021). This obituary of Orange Scott Blood, born in Whitefield, New Hampshire in 1830, suggests that his parents named him as a tribute to their Methodist minister stationed in Lancaster, New Hampshire.
[39] O. Scott, "Lancaster, N.H.," *Zion's Herald*, December 5, 1827, vol. 5, no. 49, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022).

believed had helped her with "rising in the divine life." This leadership demonstrates Amey Scott's continued involvement in the religious communities that Orange Scott would cultivate. At the New England Conference at Portsmouth, church authorities once again endorsed Scott's tenure by renewing his appointment to the Lancaster station for a second year. And during this second conference year, Amey Scott continued to support her husband by attending revivals and camp meetings whenever her fragile health allowed.[40]

Although the second year in Lancaster was "not very extraordinary in any respect," Orange Scott nonetheless considered it to be "pleasant" and "profitable." Amey Scott singled out her husband's revivals in the eastern part of Lancaster as being especially effective. She credited this revival to a new technique which Orange Scott had helped pioneer in coordination with his presiding elder, John Lord, called the "four days' meeting."[41] Scott's relationship with Lord during the two conference years he was stationed in Lancaster in 1827-1828 and 1828-1829, proved instrumental. Scott characterized Lord as a man who allowed ministers under him to implement innovative ideas that could more effectively expand the influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church. "Brother Lord" was, as Scott recalled, "always willing for every good word and work." As a result, when a Methodist minister suggested the idea for a new "Three Day Meeting," the presiding elder "immediately consented" to the request.[42]

The experimental three-day meeting was met with what Scott described as "considerable success." In response, he worked with other ministers to organize a camp meeting at Lisbon,

[40] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 44, 52-53. During the spring of 1829, Amey Scott toured the eastern part of Lancaster in the aftermath of a revival Orange Scott had supervised. She also attended a three days' meeting at Lunenburg, a town just across the Connecticut River.

[41] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 19. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 50. "Seventy-Five Years of New England Methodism.," *Zion's Herald*, September 14, 1898, vol. 76, no. 37, p. 1168, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed March 15, 2021). The *Zion's Herald* offered a brief explanation of Lord's four days meeting in a historical review of the New England Conference on its 75th anniversary, describing them as a "revival" mechanism that became the template for 30 years.

[42] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 19.

New Hampshire under this three-days model, which would go from Tuesday to Thursday. However, he and the other ministers present made the decision during the meeting to extend it out of "so much interest" and turn it into a "Six Day Meeting." This meeting, however, received mixed results. Although somewhat successful, Scott and the other ministers came to conclude that three days was too short, and six days was too long. "Four days was just about the right length of time," he said of their final decision.[43]

These four-day meetings became the norm in all the towns under Lord's care. Scott himself was persuaded of their effectiveness. As he observed, "They were held thick and fast, and hundreds on hundreds in the space of a few months, were converted by these means." Similarly, Amey Scott saw their effectiveness firsthand. The four days meeting in eastern Lancaster during the final months of 1828 was only one such example. "The good work is not confined to the eastern part of the town," she further observed in December, "many in different parts have catched the holy flame…. Also, in a neighboring town, the good work is going on."[44]

During this second conference year in Lancaster, Orange Scott received greater responsibility from Lord. Amey Scott herself noted that her husband's work was not exclusively confined to the town of Lancaster. Orange Scott later recalled that Lord had assigned him to preach in towns outside his station. This not only meant crossing the border into Vermont to preach, but also included preaching "thirty or forty miles up the Connecticut River." Lord even sent Scott to represent him at quarterly meetings.[45]

While Scott was inclined to credit Lord and a contemporary minister, Haskel Wheelock, with the innovation and promotion of these four-day meetings that helped transform the district,

[43] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 20.
[44] Orange Scott *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 20. Amey Scott, *The Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 51.
[45] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 19.

Amey Scott praised her husband for the Methodist Episcopal Church's success in Lancaster and the nearby towns. "Thanks be to God that the labors of his servant, among this people, are not in vain," she declared in her diary. In their final months stationed in Lancaster, Amey Scott's health began to fail again. She wrote privately of her fears that she would die or – even worse – that she would live and become "a dead weight" to her husband and "a hindrance to the prosperity of thy cause."[46]

When Orange Scott departed for the annual conference in June 1829, Amey Scott took their son and daughter with her to Lyndon to visit family and friends. Unlike her last visit there, this trip proved far more melancholy. She learned that many of her friends had died in her absence to the point where she lamented, "I have sometimes been almost ready to inquire, who is not dead?" Orange Scott's return from the annual conference only exacerbated problems. The church had assigned him to Springfield, Massachusetts. Unlike their previous assignments, Amey Scott did not approve of the new station. Although it is unclear if she voiced her frustrations to her husband, she recorded her thoughts in her diary. "I have some trials about going so far from my friends this year," she wrote before offering a litany of reasons she opposed the appointment, from her own poor health to a desire to be close to her family. This entry, written immediately upon Orange Scott's arrival in Lyndon, reflected his wife's raw and immediate thoughts upon learning the news about their assignment. Although the Lancaster station had taken her from the friends she had made in Charlestown and Boston, it also brought her closer to her family and friends. The Springfield assignment meant moving for the third time in four years at a difficult and uncertain period in her life. Nevertheless, she ended her ruminations with the conclusion that "I must resign all unto his [God's] hands."[47]

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[46] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 51-52.
[47] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 54-55.

Within only a few days of Orange Scott's return to Lyndon, the family had packed and set out for their new home of Springfield with only the boxes they could fit in a one-horse-chair.[48] The Scotts made the two-hundred-mile journey in four days, traveling approximately fifty miles a day, and reached their destination sometime in the first weeks of July.[49] "I stood my journey much better than I expected," Amey Scott reported upon their arrival in Springfield, indicating the move had been largely uneventful. They then arrived at what Orange Scott described as "A fine parsonage" that had already been completely furnished with "heavy furniture" and, presumably, with the other amenities that his family would require. "We arrived … finding everything in order," he recollected of his first days in Springfield.[50]

More important for both Orange and Amey Scott than their place of residence, however, was the community that they had joined. Although Orange Scott recalled that the Methodist church in Springfield at that time "was not in what might be properly called a reformation spirit," he insisted that "the people's hearts were open and prepared to receive us." Amey Scott shared her husband's views of the state of religion. While ill health and maternal duties left her "quite confined with my little family" she observed in early August 1829 that "There appears to be many living souls here; but still I think a reformation is needed much in the church…." She carried this perspective further. "I hope not only to see it [reformation] in the church," she wrote, "but also among the sinners."[51] Revival and reform, according to Amey Scott, required setting the church on the right footing but could not be confined to the Methodist community alone. The

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[48] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 55. Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 20

[49] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 20. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 55-56. Orange Scott recalled in his autobiography that they arrived in Springfield in the "fore part of July." Amey Scott, however, recorded in her diary on August 1, 1829 "we have been [in Springfield] about three weeks." Exactly three weeks would put their arrival on July 10, 1829. Accounting for Amey Scott's "about," a plausible date range for their arrival would be July 7-July 13, 1829.

[50] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 55. Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 20.

[51] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 21. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 55-56.

Scotts, then, found Springfield to be an opportunity for significant religious revival that simply needed the right person and movement to tap into its underlying potential. This echoed a mentality that would inform much of Scott's thinking in the years to follow. He believed moral improvement in society could only occur if the churches got their own houses in order. Church reform, then, always preceded societal reform.

As was the case with Lancaster, Scott believed the religious vacuum in Springfield afforded the Methodists an opportunity to make major inroads. They faced little competition for converts. In particular, he cited the Universalists as a point of emphasis. He did not need to engage in any new controversies with them as he had done in Charlestown because they were "entirely extinct" by the time he reached Springfield. Scott's earlier debate with Whittemore had helped create this environment for him, as there is circumstantial evidence that Timothy Merritt, the Methodist minister in charge of Springfield at the time, had either liberally incorporated or outright plagiarized Orange Scott's *Universalist Magazine* articles during a public debate with the Universalists there.[52] But regardless of how it happened, the fact remained that the Universalists were on the decline by the time Scott assumed his new station.

Scott immediately went to work bringing the revivalist approach he had perfected during his many years as a minister in rural and small-town New England. "The first Sabbath was ominous of good," he recalled. His inaugural sermon in Springfield struck an optimistic tone, telling congregants he predicted a revival in their community. As a believer in free will and moral agency, however, Scott understood that the success or failure of the church ultimately

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[52] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 21. In his autobiography, Scott briefly recounted the controversy between Methodist minister Timothy Merritt and Universalist minister R.L. Page, which he described as a complete victory for Merritt. The debate between Merritt and Page involved each side reading a "written communication from the Methodist pulpit every other week." The Universalist newspaper in Boston, *Trumpet*, wrote an article in 1831 hoping to scandalize this debate by arguing that Timothy Merritt had taken Orange Scott's articles from the debate with Whittemore and "g[a]ve them to the public as his own." See "Controversy with a Methodist.," *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, June 11, 1831, vol 3, no. 50, p. 198, ProQuest, American Periodicals.

rested in their hands. He felt his job was simply to guide them to success. "The people believed it," he reported of these first several weeks, "and took hold and labored accordingly."[53]

He organized society and prayer meetings, which he observed were all "well attended, and powerful and profitable." Amey Scott recorded in her diary at the time that she had witnessed "some cases of conviction" that resulted from these meetings. But the culmination of this work in Springfield came in the middle of August, about a month after the Scotts arrived. Orange Scott saw an upcoming camp meeting at Somers as an opportunity to evangelize the congregation and eventually the community of Springfield as a whole. On the Sunday before the Somers meeting, Scott promoted the upcoming event during his sermon. He urged "any who had made up their minds to seek salvation" to attend and called on them to stand up and be recognized by the congregation. This gambit worked, leaving what Scott described as "a powerful impression on the church and congregation" that was "deeply interesting." A local carpenter, Gideon M. Murphy, stood up and was soon followed by twelve others. The following day, Scott and the rest of this group departed Springfield for Somers.[54]

Scott offered few specific details of the Springfield group's experience at Somers, other than to say they "enjoyed the privilege of hearing much good preaching and praying." Amey Scott provided no details of her husband's time in Somers since she had stayed behind with their three children. The Scotts, however, paid more attention to the results of the camp meeting than to its specific circumstances. About a quarter of those converted at the Somers meeting came from Springfield alone, totaling between twelve and fifteen people. And both Orange and Amey Scott described a dramatic change in Springfield after the meeting. Orange Scott noted that "After this our meetings were multiplied … attended by overwhelming congregations, day-time

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[53] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 21.
[54] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 21-22. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 56.

and evening, Sabbath and week day, sun-shine and rain." Amey Scott offered an account of her own impressions in her diary on September 7, 1829. "Glory to the name of Jesus for what he is doing for the people of Springfield," she wrote, singling out the Somers meeting as the pivotal moment that had inaugurated "a new spring to a blessed work which is now going on among us." She estimated that Orange Scott had converted forty people in the two weeks after the Somers meeting and that he had won over one hundred more during the late summer and fall, with almost all of them joining their church.[55] It was during that revival that the Scotts truly became part of the Springfield community. Amey Scott, for all her earlier misgivings, admitted, "I begin to feel quite at home here."[56]

After the five weeks of revival in August and September, the fervor began to decline and reached a plateau. Scott later attributed this to his own personal exhaustion from "five weeks wearisome labor" and operating largely on his own in Springfield without any assistance from the Methodist Episcopal Church. "Could we have had a fresh set of hands to enter the field," he later declared, "we would have seen more fresh results." Even as the zeal declined, Scott continued to gain converts and win new members for his church. Although the rapid growth had ended, the consequences of the revival had, in Scott's phrasing, forever "changed the whole aspect of things in the Church." Methodist Episcopal Church membership in Springfield increased over 50% in the span of a few weeks, and this increase remained a permanent feature in the town to the point where a second Methodist church had to be established off Pincheon Street in the years that followed. The conversions under Scott's care were enduring, with only a

[55] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 21-22. Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 56-57. In his autobiography, Scott put this number at 130, with 100 joining the Methodist Episcopal Church. See Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 23.

[56] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 56-58. In January 1830, Amey Scott further remarked in her annual reflection of the past year that "I find it has been filled with mercies, even more than former years."

"few" who had "made shipwreck of faith." "On the whole," Scott said in 1847, "it was one of the most choice revivals I ever witnessed or know of…. I know of no revival where so many have persevered and endured so long."[57]

In May and June 1830, Orange Scott and his family left Springfield to attend the New England Conference at New Bedford, Massachusetts. While he normally attended these conferences on his own, Amey Scott and their children traveled with him in the hopes that the trip would improve her health. Her health, however, continued to decline while in New Bedford, to the point where she worried that her children, "the dear little creatures" as she called them, "would soon be left without a mother's care." The disease afflicting her, likely tuberculosis, or pulmonary consumption as it was known at the time, "was fixing itself upon my lungs." But in addition to that disease and the physical affliction it brought her, Amey Scott continued to suffer emotional anguish. During this phase of her illness, her longstanding fears that she was unworthy of God's redemptive love began to shift towards a fear that she was not yet ready to leave her children alone in the world. As she recorded in her diary at the time, "the thoughts of being taken from them and leaving them destitute of a mother's care, cause sensations too painful to be easily expressed." These fears, she noted, had nothing to do with Orange Scott or his performance as a parent. To the contrary, she privately felt he was a good father. Instead, it revolved exclusively around her belief that she provided for them as a woman in ways he never could. "I am thankful that they have a kind and an affectionate father," she wrote, before adding, "but a father cannot be a mother."[58] Although Amey Scott's health eventually recovered after the conference, it nevertheless continued to remain increasingly fragile.

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[57] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 23-24.
[58] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 58-60.

At that same time, Orange Scott prepared to receive his new assignment. The Methodists of Springfield wanted him to return as their stationed minister, even presenting petitions to the annual conference in the hopes that they would re-assign him for another year. They only partly had their wish fulfilled. Scott was not stationed at their church for a second year. Instead, the New England Conference promoted him to the rank of presiding elder and placed him in charge of the entirety of Springfield District. This put him in command of a district which included Springfield in the center and much of the surrounding area. It also meant his family would continue to live there for as long as he retained the position. In 1847, Scott described the district as encompassing western Massachusetts and parts of Connecticut. "It is a most delightful field of labor for Presiding Elder or Preacher," he observed, describing its people as "a race of hardy and independent sons of Pilgrims, who cannot be bound with fetters or chains, nor submit to the loss of their civil or religious liberty."[59] His successful revival in Springfield during the fall of 1829 had undoubtedly resulted in his elevation to presiding elder. For the next four conference years, 1830-1831, 1831-1832, 1832-1833, and 1833-1834, he would serve as presiding elder of Springfield District. This position marked the high watermark of his power, prestige, and institutional influence within the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Scott received this promotion "with fear and trembling," because of the size of such a "large" district and the fact that he would hold superior rank in church hierarchy to other preachers for the first time in his ministry. His relative youth and inexperience reinforced these fears. He was just over thirty years of age when elevated to this position, and worried that he would have to provide "instruction" to younger ministers and oversee older ministers whom he had until recently considered to be his superiors in the church. As with all his prior stations, Scott

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[59] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 30.

accepted the appointment and returned to Springfield for the following four years. Although his return brought many church members in Springfield "considerable relief," Scott observed that there were many who still felt "aggrieved" that he would no longer be their minister.[60] He maintained an active presence in their church's affairs but his responsibilities as a presiding elder meant that his involvement with the community he had helped cultivate would be limited for the remainder of his tenure on the district. Springfield was only one of many towns under his care, and he would spend much of the following years traveling across his district and organizing revivals in other distant townships and communities.

One minister succinctly summarized the responsibilities of the position as such: "The principal business was to license local preachers, to examine their character, renew their licenses, and recommend them to the traveling connection."[61] As Scott came to make the position his own, he increasingly regarded it as an important part of effective church government. Presiding elders, he believed, should not merely facilitate church operations; they needed to shape and cultivate the ministers and laity under their care. When discussing the importance of the quarterly meetings that the presiding elders attended, for example, he argued that a presiding elder should be more than "a *cipher* in his district."[62] This attitude would become increasingly important when slavery and abolition became greater considerations for the Methodist Episcopal Church during the 1830s.

Amey Scott also shared some of this newfound responsibility. In particular, she took on the role of counselor and supporter of many of the stationed preachers and itinerant ministers that

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[60] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 25.
[61] A.L. Cooper, "A Fragment of Methodist History," *Zion's Herald*, November 18, 1885, vol. 62, no. 46, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).
[62] O. Scott, "Quarterly Meetings," *Zion's Herald*, April 29, 1835, vol. 6, no. 17, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022).

answered to her husband. For his part, Orange Scott believed his wife to be an asset in helping him fulfill the duties of presiding elder. "Many are the instances," he said of his tenure as presiding elder in Springfield, "in which young preachers, ... laboring under trials respecting their duty, have found their minds greatly relieved and comforted by the counsels, prayers, and sympathies of '*Sister Scott*.'"[63] Amey Scott's contributions to her husband's ministry, then, were not simply confined to helping promote and cultivate Methodist communities. She actively engaged with the operations of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the Springfield District by advising her husband and supporting the district's ministers.

Orange Scott began his tenure as presiding elder by surveying his district, attending quarterly meetings four times a year across the region. During his first tour, he used this opportunity to gauge the state of the various circuits and stations under his supervision. He subdivided this tour into two halves, traveling across the northern stations first before returning to Springfield and then departing for the southern half. This inaugural tour nearly proved fatal, as Scott suffered what he later called "something of a paralytic turn" that left him nearly incapacitated. This "shock of the numb palsy" temporarily paralyzed half his body and put him in a state where "I had scarcely a particle of reason left." His health eventually recovered, allowing him to complete the tour of the northern portion of his district and return to a family that had received word of his death. "They were therefore glad to see my face alive," Scott later recounted.[64] Overall, he found the northern portion of his district to be in a state that was "generally promising." He then left Springfield to tour the southern half of the district, which he

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[63] Orange Scott, "Mrs. Amey Scott," in *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 105.

[64] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 26-27. Although Scott did not offer a date of when this happened except to say that it occurred during his first tour of Springfield District, it likely occurred sometime in early July. In her diary on July 25, 1830, Amey Scott writes that she was "saved from the heavy trial under which I was laboring two weeks ago." Although vague, this would align with Orange Scott's account that his family had learned that he had died. See Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 60.

felt was “still more profitable.” Although these tours did not replicate his earlier successes at Springfield, they made an impact in the towns and communities under his care. “He had scarcely made his first tour among the appointments ere the district was on fire of reformation,” one preacher under his charge later recalled.[65]

Scott’s first year as a presiding elder of the Springfield District proved far less eventful to him than his earlier years in the ministry. His autobiography paid little attention to this first year in the new position, except as it related to revivals and religious fervor on his district. This dearth of information again offers insight into Scott’s state of mind and the way he viewed this new position. Above all, Scott was a popular preacher and an evangelist. He felt most at home when promoting his beliefs and worldview to the people. For example, the proudest moment of this opening year as a presiding elder came when he had the opportunity to organize a camp meeting on his own, the first time in his entire ministry he had been afforded the chance to do so. “The preachers were baptized with the Holy Ghost – the brethren were in the spirit of prayer – sinners were continually inquiring the way to Zion,” he later wrote of this revival.[66] The choice and order of participants in this case is significant, once again reflecting a mainstay of his worldview. Moral revival flowed from ministers to church members to ordinary people. Scott’s approach to revival, whether in a religious or secular context, followed this same template.

The absence of lengthy discussion or personal reflection on his responsibilities as presiding elder in his autobiography indicates that Scott did not enjoy the bureaucracy that came with his new rank. When ruminating on this camp meeting, he described the “interesting part of it” as being the days in which “one hundred were forward for prayers at once.” This reinforces an

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[65] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 27. Rev. J. Bridges, quoted in Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 63.
[66] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 27.

important component to both Orange Scott the minister and Orange Scott the person. He cared little for hierarchy and viewed it as a means to an end. Bureaucratic matters, such as deciding when and where to send ministers under his charge, had become the paramount issues for his consideration rather than how to convert people more effectively.[67] When the New England Conference renewed his appointment as presiding elder of the Springfield District, however, he came to enjoy his second year far more than the first. He credited this largely to the fact that he felt more comfortable in his position, having cultivated relationships with ministers and members during his first year. This enabled him to prioritize revivalism in his second year, embodied by what he termed "another edition of the Somers Camp Meeting," the revival from his time as Springfield's stationed minister.[68]

Scott's tenure as a presiding elder, his appointment at such an early age, and his retention of the position for such a lengthy period, indicate that he had been successful at both the administrative and religious components of the position. However, he achieved his most success when position intersected with passion. Traveling to dedication sermons, for example, afforded him the opportunity to engage the public directly and return to his roots as a popular preacher. In one such example, R.W. Allen, a young preacher who began his ministry in the early 1830s, recalled a dedication sermon that Scott gave at Stafford, Connecticut in January 1833. The sermon, derived from Deuteronomy 32:2, left Allen deeply impressed with Scott's oratory capabilities.[69] "I have heard many men preach," he observed, "but have heard but few, if any,

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[67] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 27. R.W. Allen, "My First Circuit," *Zion's Herald*, October 7, 1875, vol. 52, no. 40, p. 315, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021). In this article, R.W. Allen recounted that Presiding Elder Orange Scott sent him to Tolland, Connecticut to help with the preaching in that area.
[68] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 28.
[69] Deuteronomy 32:2-4 (KJV), reads "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, As the small rain upon the gender herb, And as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect."

who produced such a powerful impression on an audience." Scott retained his signature ability to strike at the latent emotional sentiment within his audience. His "great sermon," delivered with "persuasive eloquence," had, according to Allen, "produced a deep impression" that was powerful enough to "move the multitudes."[70]

Even Scott's critics acknowledged his talent as a presiding elder and praised the effectiveness of his popular preaching style. In 1860, Abel Stevens, one of Scott's adversaries during the debates over slavery and abolition within the Methodist Episcopal Church, reflected on his early interactions with Presiding Elder Scott. First meeting Scott in 1831, Stevens later mused, "No Methodist preacher of New England was more 'popular' than he." Wilbur Fisk, the principal of Wesleyan University in Middletown, might have been "the great man of the denomination in the Eastern States," but Stevens argued that "Orange Scott was only second in rank to him." And during public events like camp meetings and quarterly meetings, Stevens admitted that Scott surpassed Fisk in greatness. This praise, coming from a great admirer of Fisk, illustrates the renown which Scott had accumulated within the Methodist Episcopal Church by the time he had become presiding elder. But Stevens went further. Scott, he argued, possessed a "better physical condition" and "a popular, powerful sort of eloquence" that "made him a man for command, for chieftainship among the masses; and the people loved him, and followed him with enthusiasm." Having witnessed such "superhuman" oratory firsthand at camp meetings, Stevens asserted that Scott's "noble voice" sent "its trumpet blasts afar through the forests, and gave the multitudes of hearers waving under its spell like the trees under the gale." This talent

[70] R.W. Allen, "My First Circuit," *Zion's Herald*, August 31, 1876, vol. 53, no. 32, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).

and popularity, then, made Scott not merely "a capital Administrator in the Church"; it made him "*the* Presiding Elder of New England Methodism in that day."[71]

In addition to furnishing a description of Scott's tenure on the Springfield District, Abel Stevens also offered a portrait of Orange Scott. At thirty-one years of age, Scott was in his physical prime. He possessed the energy to, as Stevens put it, go "driving about his district continually" to help the churches under his care, reply to "polemical" critics of the church, promote denominational material, and assist his ministers. "In his prime, he was a noble looking man," Stevens said of Scott's physical appearance, "a man to love, - with a generous, open countenance; a luminous eye, apparently deeply set, but only because his intellectual brow protruded over it;...." But for Stevens, Scott's voice was his most defining characteristic. It was "a voice of great sweetness in conversation, and great compass and power in public discourse," he wrote, adding that it amounted to "a musical orotund" that could "almost infallibly indicate a man at once courageous and generous." For Stevens, Scott's "popular force" stemmed from his voice and his oratory skills, something he said was "undefined by his hearers, but always profoundly felt."[72]

Scott's humble origins and unconventional path to the office of presiding elder meant that he could run his station in an untraditional way. In the same way evangelization and revival had characterized his early days in the ministry, he placed the greatest emphasis on employing whatever means were most effective to accomplish those ends. In one example, a member of the Methodist Church in his district, Benoni Austin, met him on the road to Springfield to ask for

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[71] A. Stevens, "From the Rev. Abel Stevens, D.D., LL.D., October 22, 1860," in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit; or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations, from the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Five*, vol. 7, Sabin Americana (accessed February 10, 2021), 670-671.
[72] A. Stevens, "From the Rev. Abel Stevens," in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit,* 671.

help in rebuilding the Methodist community in Willimantic, Connecticut. Scott was initially reluctant to do so since that town had already failed to sustain a preacher. A heartfelt appeal from Austin and his friend, however, persuaded Scott to change his mind. "I will do the best I can," Austin recalled Scott telling him. Shortly thereafter, Scott dispatched a man Austin described as being "an humble and true man of God." Austin, who sustained Scott's selection, found himself satisfied with the arrangement. He had spent $250 supporting the minister and felt it had been worthwhile since the minister converted two of his children and a hundred residents of Willimantic.[73] This account underscores Presiding Elder Scott's responsiveness to the members and ministers of his station. As a leader, he was not inflexible in running his station and willing to change his mind if he believed it would better promote the cause of conversion.

Scott's talent as a presiding elder continued to impress the New England Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church more broadly. By 1833, he was chosen by his conference to represent them on the Joint Board of Trustees and Visitors for Wesleyan University, a position occupied by leading authorities in the church such as Wesleyan University President Wilbur Fisk, Scott's mentor Joseph A. Merrill, and Nathan Bangs. Scott's selection as a representative for the New England Conference vindicates much of Abel Stevens' observation about Scott's prominence within the church. Although lacking a formal educational background, the Methodist Episcopal Church saw him as a man with a great deal of empirical and self-taught knowledge who could help facilitate the education of the next generation of Methodists ministers.[74]

This period also marked Scott's first foray into the realm of author and publisher, two positions which would characterize much of his life thereafter. In 1830, he published the first of

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[73] A.H. Bennett, "Untitled," *Zion's Herald*, December 21, 1887, vol. 64, no. 51, p. 407, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).

[74] "Wesleyan University.," *Genius of Temperance, Philanthropist, and People's Advocate*, September 4, 1833, vol. 4, no. 9, p. 3, Gale Slavery and Anti-Slavery Database (accessed April 7, 2022).

several volumes of a hymn book, entitled *The New and Improved Camp Meeting Hymn Book*. This work, a collection of 135 hymns, encapsulated the emotive, evangelical revivalism which Scott had spent his years in the ministry promoting and perfecting. As the years progressed, Scott increasingly came to see the power and influence of the printing press, both in book and newspaper form. When reflecting on Scott's greatest attributes, Scott's biographer, admirer, and protégé, Lucius C. Matlack, emphasized his mentor's business acumen and estimated that he had sold $15,000 worth of books during his tenure as presiding elder.[75]

For his part, however, Scott did not regard the presiding eldership as fondly as others did. Reflecting on this transition from stationed minister to presiding elder in a conversation with Cyrus Prindle in 1847, Scott lamented that his elevation to that position had allowed "the spirit of the world to influence me as it ought not." The business and institutional obligations that came with being a presiding elder were the sources of this disappointment. "I was a little too much in the book business," he recalled to Prindle. Nevertheless, things were not entirely terrible. "All along that period," he said of his presiding elder days, "I had good times." But they could not surpass his time as an itinerant minister and a stationed preacher. "Up to the time of my presiding eldership, I had glorious times."[76]

Scott's duties as presiding elder across the Springfield District meant that he spent considerable time away from home, which put greater physical and emotional strain on Amey Scott. Her diary during Scott's early years as a presiding elder reflect the challenges of the new

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[75] *The New and Improved Camp Meeting Hymn Book: Being a Choice Selected of Hymns from the Most Improved Authors. Designed to Aid in the Public and Private Devotions of Christians*, edited by Orange Scott (Brookefield, MA: E. & G. Merriam, Printers, 1830), The Hymn Society and Calvin University, https://hymnary.org/hymnal/NICM1830?page=0 (accessed July 20, 2022). Lucius Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 301-302. A. Stevens, "From the Rev. Abel Stevens," in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 671. Abel Stevens seemingly corroborated Matlack's statement by asserting that, "He sold more Methodist books, I doubt not, than any preacher of the East, then or since."
[76] Orange Scott, quoted in Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 282-283.

position. Her health gradually began to deteriorate in 1831 and 1832. She would fall ill and though she recovered, these years began a steady decline from which she never fully regained her strength. And all while struggling with physical ailment and spiritual turmoil, she continued to care for her children during Orange Scott's many absences.[77] On May 25, 1831, during "a violent cold" and "very poor" health, she nonetheless gave birth to a fourth child, Hopestill Bigelow Scott. She aptly summarized this period of her life and that of her family as being filled with "the most trials and greatest blessings … in my Christian experience."[78]

The difficulties Amey Scott faced were reflective of something that would continue to characterize Orange Scott: he often neglected family life. Lucius Matlack later remarked that Scott "was not a domestic man" and admitted that this was "eminently" his "fault." Per Matlack's own observation, Scott "denied himself the peerless satisfaction of witnessing and sharing his children's sports and glee" and allowed his wife to "monopolize" most domestic considerations.[79] Matlack, however, was quick to clarify that this neglect did not mean Scott wronged his children. Scott still managed to "exercise a general oversight of the family, arrange the children's studies, provide for their wants, and then he was away from home again in the great work of religion and reform." Scott always prioritized those two issues of religion and reform over the course of his life, and it came at the cost of those personal moments with his

[77] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 63-68. W.J. Hambleton, "Winchendon, Mass.," *Zion's Herald*, September 30, 1872, vol. 52, no. 39, p. 306, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021). The *Zion's Herald* article references a dedication sermon that Orange Scott preached for a new church in Depot Village in 1833.
[78] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 68.
[79] Lucius Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 304. Matlack, who he did not become acquainted with Scott until later in the 1830s, refers to Scott's second marriage to Eliza Dearborn. Nevertheless, his account aligns well with Amey Scott's diary, and indicates that Orange Scott's neglect of family life predated his involvement with abolitionism. As we have seen, Amey Scott worried that Orange Scott could not fulfill what she viewed as her responsibilities to the household. Moreover, Orange Scott's statements about Amey Scott indicate she was a capable mother of their children in a similar vein to Matlack's praise of Eliza Dearborn Scott.

family. Because he met the temporal needs of his family and left them in the capable hands of his wife, Matlack concluded that "the only actual sufferer was Mr. Scott himself."[80]

Scott's constant travels also put a strain on the health of his family. By journeying to different places across New England, he would occasionally fall sick and then bring that sickness back with him. In January 1831, for example, Scott returned to Springfield while sick and all four of his children came down with the same illness. Even as the children fell ill, duties required Scott to leave his family once again. "The babe [Hopestill] has indeed been quite sick," Amey Scott lamented, adding that the physician predicted he would not survive. She recorded in her diary that she had to bear the challenge of caring for the children entirely on her own and that she had to confront the thought of losing her youngest son without the support of her husband. "My husband was from home," she wrote a few weeks later, "and I expected alone to have been called to receive a visit from the holy angels to convey my child to paradise." When Hopestill recovered, she pointedly credited the physician for his recovery and the "kind attentions" he had provided to the children.[81]

Despite the strains that her familial considerations placed on her, Amey Scott continued to support her husband. She attended class meetings as her health would allow, and even hosted them in their house. "She was always at her post in them when her health and family concerns would permit," Orange Scott observed in 1840 of his wife's "great love" of those meetings.[82] Balancing spiritual growth with the needs of her family was paramount to her, but it also presented her with significant challenges. By May 1832, she decided to establish rules that she intended to govern her life and that of her family. She based these new rules on ones that she had

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[80] Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 304-305.
[81] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 68.
[82] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 68-69. Orange Scott, "Mrs. Amey Scott.," in *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 107.

privately tried to adopt for herself and the family in the past. These rules, however, offer insight into the way she ran the Scott household during Orange Scott's prolonged absences. She resolved to wake up at five in the morning and go to bed at ten at night. During this time, she spent twelve hours a day tending to "my household affairs" and "taking care of my family." She set aside five hours between three-hour blocks of domestic labor to serve as "stated seasons for secret devotions" that were characterized by reading scripture, meditation, prayer, and reflection. She further subdivided these daily devotionals by day, with specific days dedicated to specific content. For example, Monday through Thursday dealt with various religious and theological topics of her choosing while Fridays were "days of self-examination, fasting or abstinence, and prayer." Through all of this, Amey Scott also took it upon herself to cultivate the same habits, manners, and religious worldview in her children. "The bodies and souls of her children were constantly under her care; and her attention to their spiritual wants, was unremitting," Orange Scott wrote of her in 1835, "They [the children] were learnt to pray as soon as they could speak, and instructed in the fundamentals of religion when first their young ideas began to shoot."[83]

1832 proved to be a pivotal year for the family. That May, Scott attended his first general conference in Philadelphia as one of fourteen delegates on behalf of the New England Conference, having been elected by the ministers of the New England annual conference in 1831 and tying for the third-most votes overall.[84] The general conferences were major events, meeting in different cities once every four years by delegates of the various annual conferences across the

[83] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 71-73. O. Scott, "Biographical. Mrs. Amey Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, April 22, 1835, vol. 6, no. 16, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 10, 2022).
[84] James Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1796-1910* (Boston, MA: Published by the Conference, 1910), p. 191, HaithiTrust (accessed August 15, 2022). Only Wilbur Fisk, the esteemed president of Wesleyan University, and Stoddard got more votes than Scott, each garnering 67 of the 71 votes cast. Scott received 64, more votes than his former presiding elder, John Lindsay.

United States. Delegates were usually selected at the annual conferences in the year preceding the general conference.[85]

The general conferences were crucial for the Methodist Episcopal Church. They were not only a place to handle the administrative affairs of the church, such as organizational or financial considerations. The delegates at general conferences could, and did, debate church teaching on different religious and social questions and even possessed the power to modify the Methodist Discipline, the rules which governed the proper behavior of ministers and members. Although Scott did not participate in these questions in 1832 in a meaningful way, the Philadelphia Conference offered him insight into the mechanisms of a general conference and exposed him for the first time to Methodist ministers outside of conferences in the New England states.

Both Orange Scott and his younger brother and fellow minister, Ephraim Scott, arrived in Springfield from the general conference in May 1832 sick with measles. It did not take long before the disease passed from the two ministers to the four children. In a sense of foreboding, Amey Scott wrote on June 6, 1832 that she feared the worst was yet to come and said she would have "need of more grace to prepare me for new cares and trials." Those fears came to fruition in the following weeks, when Orange Scott departed from Springfield to attend the New England annual conference in Providence, Rhode Island. Tragedy struck days later on July 1, 1832 when Hopestill Bigelow Scott, the youngest of the Scott children, succumbed to the measles that had already infected Orange Scott, Ephraim Scott, and the three other children. "This was a solemn day," Amey Scott began in her diary, "My husband was from home, attending the annual conference..., when the grim messenger death, appeared and snatched my lovely infant from my arms." Hopestill's death came suddenly and unexpectedly. Although he never fully recovered

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[85] "Minutes of the New England Conference, Centennial Edition," Sabin Americana, Boston: J.P. Magee, 1896, p. 128 (accessed July 25, 2022).

from the illness he suffered during the previous year, Amey Scott described his health on June 30 as being "as well to all appearance as he had been for some time." And as was the case before, she found herself required to "experience a new trial" alone and in the absence of her husband.[86]

While Amey Scott grappled with tragedy in Springfield, Orange Scott faced a difficult choice of his own at the annual conference. During the conference, Scott had been invited to preach for the Beneficent Congregational Church in Providence, then the largest Congregational Church in the city. After Scott had delivered a sermon, the church's elderly minister, James Wilson, informed Scott that he was interested in hiring him as a colleague with the intention to eventually make him the "principal pastor" of the church. Scott initially consulted some of his mentors, including Joseph A. Merrill, and received conflicting feedback from them on what course of action he should take. Wilson's offer put Scott in a difficult position, forcing him to choose between remaining in his current position as a presiding elder or accepting a new opportunity that would have marked a return to the duties he loved so much. While he found the congregation to be "a noble field of labor and usefulness," he ultimately concluded that he had come to embrace his role as a presiding elder. By that point in time, he looked on the presiding eldership not in mere bureaucratic terms; he instead saw the role as an opportunity to oversee revivals across an entire district. "My itinerant field," he later recalled, "I thought afforded a nobler and greater field of doing good."[87] By the summer of 1832, then, Scott had come to view his duties as a presiding elder as the culmination of his work as an itinerant minister in the early 1820s and his labors as a stationed minister in the second half of the decade.

Hopestill's sudden death, however, shocked Orange and Amey Scott. But the loss of their thirteen-month-old son fell especially hard on Amey Scott. She wrote at the time that she "felt to

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[86] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 73-75.
[87] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 28-29.

him a peculiarly tender tie, which it was hard to sever." Upon Orange Scott's return from the annual conference, they made the decision to depart Springfield for Vermont on a much-needed visit with their family and friends. "We have long anticipated a journey to Vermont," Amey Scott wrote in her diary, "O that our journey may be rendered a blessing both to our bodies and souls." Later that month, the couple set out for the state of their birth.[88]

The retreat to Vermont in July and August 1832 offered both Orange and Amey Scott the reprieve that they both needed. They first set out to visit Orange Scott's family, traveling across Vermont to meet his old friends before arriving in Barre on July 28. "We were cheerfully entertained," Amey Scott recounted of their time with Orange Scott's friends. She further reported that Scott's family in Vermont was doing well, with one lone exception: his youngest brother, who was suffering from what she described as "a very singular lameness which has prevented his lying down for several months." Orange Scott's brother had been converted in the year after his own conversion but had fallen out of religion by the time the Scotts arrived in Vermont. Although he passed away only a few months later, the trip afforded Scott the opportunity to come to grips with his brother's imminent passing. While no record exists of their interactions during this time, he likely used the opportunity to exhort his brother to return to the religious fold. As he wrote a few years later in 1840, he was hopeful his youngest brother ultimately died "in peace."[89]

On August 2, 1832, the Scotts arrived in Lyndon, Vermont to visit Amey Scott's family and attend the upcoming annual meeting of the New Hampshire Conference of the Methodist

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[88] "Died.," *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald*, July 20, 1832, vol. 6, no. 47, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 10, 2022). Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 75, 77, 81. Upon returning to Springfield, Amey Scott remarked that she "found our children in better health than when we left." This statement suggests that the three surviving Scott children did not accompany them to Vermont.
[89] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 77. Orange Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 78-79n.

Episcopal Church. Like the New England Conference to which Orange Scott belonged, the New Hampshire Conference was one of the major conferences that composed the geographical region of New England. There they reconnected with Rev. John F. Adams, Orange Scott's friend and the man who had baptized Amey Scott. Although Orange Scott's health was inconsistent during his time in Vermont, he still managed to deliver multiple sermons while recuperating. Meanwhile, Amey Scott spent her time with her family, many of whom she had not seen in several years. This, however, proved to be a bittersweet occasion, but one which she felt was beneficial to her. She bonded with her brother-in-law over her sister's death. "It was a solemn and profitable day to me," she wrote of their conversation, favorably recounting the last words her brother-in-law had told her sister and finding solace in the fact that he had found spiritual peace in her passing. She made further use of her time by "recommend[ing] religion to some of my unconverted friends."[90]

Orange and Amey Scott spent the remaining days in Vermont "agreeably" and "profitably" by visiting with family and friends as well as attending religious revivals and meetings. After approximately three weeks in Vermont, the Scotts then began their four-day trip back to Springfield, concluding what Amey Scott termed "a prosperous, though fatigueing journey." Upon their arrival in Springfield, Orange Scott immediately returned to his ministerial work. He visited a quarterly meeting in Springfield on the following day, and then attended a camp meeting in Hebron, Connecticut the day after that. And the following month, the Scotts departed for another camp meeting in Ashfield, Massachusetts. Although the loss of Hopestill still weighed on both Orange and Amey Scott, the journey to Vermont during the summer and the religious meetings they attended that fall in places like Ashfield had helped revitalize them

[90] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 78-79.

during the second half of the year. “The year 1832 is remembered by me, as one of the most highly favored of my life,” Amey Scott wrote in her diary in April 1833.[91]

The Ashfield camp meeting, however, is especially significant because Amey Scott attended this meeting with her husband and recorded in her diary how they spent their time. She offered an uncharacteristically descriptive account of this meeting because it came amid a renewed spiritual conflict within her. This relatively ordinary religious gathering, then, offers unique insight into the type of minister and evangelist that Presiding Elder Orange Scott had become by 1833. The camp meeting was plagued with poor weather, which meant prayer and class meetings were held in tents. Amey Scott’s disposition reflected the climate. She felt that her mind was “dark” as she struggled with those feelings of impending damnation that long defined her spiritual worldview.[92]

A sermon and exhortation given by Orange Scott during the camp meeting helped to change the mood. According to Amey Scott, he ended his sermon by calling for people to come forward. The message, according to her, was a powerful one. “My husband exhorted us to come to the Lord just as we were, and cast ourselves upon his mercy,” she explained before adding that his appeal carried with it a hopeful message. As she recounted, “If you cannot come as you *would*, said he, come as you *can*; but come just as *you are*, and come *now*, and believe to the full salvation of your souls.”[93] This account of Scott’s exhortation speaks volumes about his ministerial capabilities, and offers insight into both his worldview and how he promoted revivalism during his tenure as presiding elder. As a man who had once been reluctant to attend services out of a belief that he did not have proper clothes, his call to action echoed those

[91] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 79-82.
[92] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 82-84.
[93] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 84.

personal experiences in his own religious journey. In many respects, his talent at connecting with ordinary people stemmed from the fact that he could relate to their experiences because he too had come from humble beginnings. Given his own hesitancy to become a member of a church in his youth, he sought to remove the same obstacles to conversion in others by stressing the urgency at hand and the fact that God welcomed saint and sinner, rich and poor alike.

Amey Scott's use of italics is also illustrative because it identifies what he likely placed emphasis on. He highlighted two things when urging listeners to convert to religion or be renewed in faith: that they not let their shortcomings drive them away and come as they "*are*" and that they give themselves to religion immediately by coming "*now*." Scott's strategy of evangelization, then, sought to bring people into the religious fold, confident that the influences of religion would further transform and improve those who were open to religious instruction. Humans, as he understood them, were flawed beings, so waiting until one had adequately prepared themselves to embrace religion and a godly life was a futile endeavor. People could not wait to be perfected, because they needed religion to perfect them. This view echoed a fundamentally Wesleyan perspective on religion and the transformative influence of God. As Amey Scott wrote about her husband's sermon, "I now understand what Mr. Wesley meant, when he said, 'every moment Lord I need the merit of thy death.'"[94] Since Scott placed the greatest emphasis on bringing people to a state where they were receptive to transformative religion rather than being mere members of the church, it was preferable for a person to come to God as they "are" rather than as they "would" be so long as they "come now." The rest, he believed, would resolve itself.

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[94] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 85.

This sense of urgency at the heart of this appeal defined Scott's worldview. He consistently favored immediate action in pursuit of what he considered to be the good. His temperament impelled him towards constant motion and drove him into the causes that he felt strongest about. The content of his sermons often stressed the need for a similar immediate action on the part of participants. Although many of these sermons have been lost to the passing of time, some of their names have endured: "The Harvest is past," "The Loss of the Soul," "The Future Judgment," and the "Gospel Harvest."[95] Each title indicates an urgency in the need for listeners to convert to Christianity. Moreover, Scott's enthusiasm and passion certainly galvanized those around him, as indicated by Amey Scott recounting after her husband's sermon that she "felt as though all the world could not destroy my confidence."[96] But this carried beyond the revivals of his tenure as a presiding elder and extended into his work on issues of reform. Immediate and bold action was at the heart of his approach to resolving the moral, social, and spiritual problems that he confronted over the course of his life.

Scott's contemporaries found his approach as a presiding elder to be effective. One preacher that served under Scott on the Springfield District recalled in 1841:

> He was alive to his work…. He did not saunter round his district, preaching upon some old threadbare subject in a see-saw, Morpheus-inviting manner; but from the rich treasury of God's word, and from his own intellectual and moral nature, sanctified by grace, he supplied 'things new and old,' making the old *new* by the life-giving manner in which he gave to 'each a portion in due season.' He spake as the voice of God in the ear of infidelity and sin, and loud and solemn as the roar of Heaven's artillery was his voice in all the Camp and Quarterly Meetings.[97]

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[95] "Rev. R.W. Allen to Lucius C. Matlack, August 28, 1847," in Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 65. Allen furnished the titles of these sermons in his letter to Matlack, arguing that the content "will be remembered by thousands in New England." These sermon titles all directly quote or reference specific Bible verses. "The Harvest is past" is a direct quote in Jeremiah 8:20, while "The Loss of the Soul" could refer to Jesus' question in Matthew 16:25, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

[96] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 85.

[97] J. Bridge, quoted in Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 63-64.

In essence, Scott's success as a popular preacher rested on his ability to effectively combine traditional theological concepts with a radical, urgent preaching style. This theology marked a fulfillment of his efforts to navigate a middle way between the extremes of Calvinist predestination and universal salvation. But he presented this message in a way that could combine the contrasting poles of fear and hope, emphasizing that a person's actions would have eternal consequences while simultaneously reassuring them that they had the capacity and the free will to change and become better aligned with the moral good. At once, he combined urgent appeals for conversion with a welcoming and optimistic tone. "It was a beauteous trump with which he sounded forth the gospel of salvation," one itinerant minister remarked of Scott's ministry in 1833, adding that, "He spoke, and thousands listened with delight."[98]

R.W. Allen, the preacher who began his ministry under Presiding Elder Scott and later formed a public and private friendship with him, also observed the same effect. "He was moving, powerful, eloquent," Allen wrote and noted that "few preachers could move an audience like him." By Allen's observation, Scott could equally galvanize his listeners in the pulpit of the town church or the "tented grove" of the camp meeting. Scott's gifts as a preacher and presiding elder stemmed from his ability to understand his audience and tailor his style to suit their needs. Additionally, he could take the academic and the theoretical, and then connect it in intimate ways to his audience. He could play the part of emotive revivalist minister at camp meetings that brought attendees to "tears" while simultaneously delivering sermons on St. Paul and Cicero from the pulpit.[99] Through an effective use of language, Scott could explain difficult doctrinal questions in terms that ordinary people could understand and he gave them a hope and optimism

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[98] C. Adams, quoted in Lucius C. Matlack, Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott 64-65.
[99] "Rev. R.W. Allen to Lucius C. Matlack, August 28, 1847," in Lucius C. Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 65. Rev. Orange Scott, "Immortality of the Soul," *The Methodist Preacher*, February 1831, vol 2, no. 2, p. 26-28 (accessed July 25, 2022).

that helped turn their zeal into action. His camp meeting appeals for participants to go to God "as you are" in the present rather than as you "would" be in the future was reflective of this. This kind of appeal, though overshadowed by the consequences of failing to convert, nevertheless embodied an everyman and hopeful spirit. It emphasized a brand of Christianity that welcomed the flawed even as it sought to remake them. When reflecting on Scott's tenure as presiding elder of the Springfield District, Amey Scott remarked that her husband had helped create "one of the best societies in the [New England] conference, and I think some of the most stable, persevering souls I was ever acquainted with."[100]

But the most important and consistent element from Orange Scott's ministry stemmed from an extreme confidence in the correctness of his convictions. While this disposition ultimately led his critics, rivals, and even his occasional allies to consider him self-righteous and obdurate, he presented a world to his readers, listeners, and congregants with clear moral absolutes. His assertions were strong, his declarations were bold, and his beliefs were unbending. In the only Orange Scott sermon to be publicly recorded and published in its entirety, "Immortality of the Soul," Scott exemplified that tendency by opening with an audacious claim: "Materialism has no foundation in scripture, reason, or sound philosophy."[101] This sermon, based on Ecclesiastes 12:7, addressed many of the same themes that had appeared in the debates over Universalism with Thomas Whittemore and therefore served as a vindication of traditional Christian teaching on salvation and immortality.[102] But the sermon wedded this theology to an explicit rejection of materialism and championed a universal view of the entire human family

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[100] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 97.
[101] Rev. Orange Scott, "Immortality of the Soul," 25.
[102] "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7 (KJV).

that foreshadowed Scott's future activities. The portrait of humanity he painted in this sermon was one derived from his tendency towards absolute and consistent moral standards.

When Scott condemned materialism, he meant a worldview that regarded human beings as exclusively physical entities who were confined solely to their corporeal bodies. For Scott, that view of humanity was entirely wrong because the human person was a temporary union of the material and the spiritual, represented by the link between body and soul. But only the latter of these two, the spiritual soul, made the person who they were. This meant the factors that defined the material person – their physical appearance or the color of their skin – had no bearing on their humanity or their inherent worth. Scott explicitly alluded to these superficial distinctions by referencing Revelation 6:9-11. "St. John tells us, that he saw under the altar, the souls of the Martyrs," he asserted, before asking, "but did he there see the breath, the blood, the brain, and parts of God?"[103] Scott even went to lengths to highlight the universal nature of human existence. In doing so, Scott presented a world in which the humans of all nations were fundamentally one and the same because their souls originated with the same author. As such, the fact that the peoples of all nations shared an identical "desire and belief" in the immortal soul suggested that their attitudes could only come from the same God.[104]

Scott carried these claims about the universal nature of humanity even further. "All human beings are disposed to be religious in some way," he declared, signaling a willingness to define humans as a "religious animal" rather than a "rational animal" as many philosophers had concluded. "All nations have their gods, to whom they pay adoration and worship," he continued, before adding that this god could be anything because "nothing is too mean and insignificant for man to worship, rather than have no god." To Scott, then, there were no true

[103] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 28.
[104] Rev. Orange Scott, "Immortality of the Soul," 25-30.

atheists. Everyone had a god; it was only a question of who or what a person served. This disposition to condemn materialism and exalt the immortal souls of all humans would play a critical role in understanding Scott's subsequent turn in an antislavery direction. It further provides insight into his approach toward preaching. Because he conceived of humans as being fundamentally inclined towards religion, he believed his duty as a minister was to tap into that latent feeling. His sermons, therefore, were designed to elicit an emotional response from the listeners. But this emotional response did not mean that Scott dispensed with reason. As he further observed in his "Immorality of the Soul" sermon, humans were given a mind from God that they were meant to use. "The All-wise God cannot be supposed to have bestowed upon his creatures useless and superfluous faculties," he proclaimed, indicating that he saw human beings as fundamentally distinct from animals, or "brutes." However, this assertion meant that humans, as a spiritual animal, were capable of both emotional impulse and mental capacity. "Man is capable of extending his improvements beyond all bounds," he said, "He soars among the stars; surveys the heavenly bodies; investigates the laws of nature; and observes the vast machinery of heaven!"[105] Scott brought this same optimistic approach to his sermons, wedding rational and intellectual religious content with an emotional style and presentation.

Scott was a man in constant motion during his tenure as presiding elder of the Springfield District. As seen, this often-presented challenges for his family and left Amey Scott to frequently manage the household for days and weeks in his absence. But it also took a physical toll on him. "My husband's health is very poor," Amey Scott recorded in her diary in October 1833 on one of the many occasions in which he had fallen ill. In that instance, however, she explicitly attributed the issues with his health to his work as a presiding elder. "His labors have been extremely hard

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[105] Scott, "Immortality of the Soul," 28-29.

upon this district," she observed before adding that "I sometimes fear his work is almost done." In January 1834, during these struggles to balance his ministerial responsibilities with his physical well-being, Amey Scott's health began to fail. This forced her to subsist almost exclusively on a diet of wheat bread and milk, and her physical ailments caused her disposition to grow gloomier. In hopes of improving her condition, she went with Orange Scott to Boston in June 1833 to attend the annual conference. Although this did not improve her health much, she found joy in the trip. "My time was spent very agreeably while there," she wrote, adding that they met their old friends from their time on the Charlestown station for the first time since 1828. These reprieves, however, were always short-lived.[106]

Amey Scott's illness eventually caused Orange Scott's personal and ministerial worlds to collide. As her health worsened, the Methodist community in Springfield took a greater interest in her plight. Camp meetings on the district made her the subject of their prayers and supplications. This support from the larger community proved to be a source of relief, and Amey Scott credited her temporary recoveries to these prayers. "Hundreds, and perhaps thousands of prayers were offered to God for her recovery," Orange Scott wrote of these petitions in 1835. But even amid her own declining health, her concerns rested with her husband's ministry and the less fortunate. "Why is it that I … should be daily loaded with benefits," she mused of all the support she had received, "while others are perishing for want of bread?"[107]

After 1833, Amey Scott's health alternated between seriously ill and what she described as "some better." Although she briefly rallied in May 1834 so she and Orange Scott could visit their families in Vermont on the eve of the annual conference, her health steadily declined. She

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[106] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 92-95. In March 1834, when Amey Scott's health recovered, she wrote in her diary that she could "do the most of my work."

[107] O. Scott, "Biographical. Mrs. Amey Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, April 22, 1835, vol. 6, no. 16, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 10, 2022). Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 93.

spoke little of her symptoms, except in general terms. "My nervous system [is] quite deranged," she wrote in April and later reported in July that she was "feeble, faint, and fearful." Although these statements provide little insight into the specifics of the affliction, she likely suffered from tuberculosis. This disease not only affected her body but also her mind. She grew increasingly depressed and hopeless. "I have, a great part of the time for a few months past, felt tired of the world, sick of earth," she lamented in her diary in September 1834. Even when her health allowed her to attend a camp meeting near Springfield, it only offered momentary relief. By November, she had ceased to write in her diary and found herself barely able to read or pray. That month marked a turning point. "All the horrors of the most distressing form of that disease [pulmonary consumption] soon began to develop themselves," Orange Scott wrote in 1835.[108]

Amid his wife's declining health, Scott continued his work as a minister. During the annual conference of 1834 in Webster, Massachusetts, Scott was assigned as presiding elder of the Providence District in Rhode Island but made the decision to keep his family in Springfield due to his wife's health. Where the Springfield District had occupied central Massachusetts and portions of Connecticut, this new assignment transferred Scott to a district that encompassed eastern Massachusetts and much of Rhode Island. It ran from Worcester, Massachusetts in the west as far east as Needham, Massachusetts near Boston and in the north from the burgeoning factory town of Lowell, Massachusetts to Providence, Bristol, Warren, and other towns and cities in Rhode Island to the south.[109] He retained the position of presiding elder, so the assignment marked a largely lateral shift for him. That summer, he departed Springfield to complete his first

[108] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 96-99. Scott, "Biographical. Mrs. Amey Scott.," 4.
[109] O. Scott, "Providence District.," *Zion's Herald*, June 24, 1835, vol. 6, no. 25, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022). This document provides insight into the geography of the district by listing major towns and cities under Scott's care as presiding elder of Providence District.

tour of the new district but spent the entirety of his first year as presiding elder laboring in the Providence District and tending to his familial obligations back in Springfield.

Scott spent the early months of 1835 with his ailing wife, who had been confined entirely to their Springfield house in December 1834. Her health seemingly rallied to the point where they could go out riding in February 1835, but the reprieve proved fleeting. Her health worsened, and she remained in her room thereafter. "Her sufferings were very severe for a number of weeks," he wrote of February and March, lamenting her "most severe paroxysms of pain" and the way she frequently voiced a "desire to depart." But as was the case when the two met, these months marked the culmination of a spiritual challenge that had defined her life and their marriage. Amey Scott had constantly struggled with her illness out of a fear of dying and later out of a fear of losing her children. But during her battle with pulmonary consumption, probably with Orange Scott's assistance, she found herself able to "g[i]ve up" that "greatest trial." The two prayed together and spoke about religion in those final days and weeks.[110]

On the morning of April 4, 1835, Amey Scott died at the age of twenty-nine. In a letter that he wrote three days later to Benjamin Kingsbury, Jr., Orange Scott relayed a description of her final hour and a half, which they spent together in prayer. In part, he wrote:

> After prayer, in which she seemed to be much engaged, as we were standing around her bed, she said, with a strength of voice that surprised me, "Try to go to heaven, whatever may be the expense; no sacrifice is too great to make for Christ." She spoke but a word or two after this; but the motion of her hands, lips and eyes, satisfied me that she was happy. Her eyes soon became fixed, and in a few moments her spirit departed, I doubt not, to the paradise of God."[111]

Amey Scott's death devastated Orange Scott even if his religious faith offered him some measure of comfort. "My loss, which is indescribable," he nevertheless wrote, "is her infinite gain." He

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[110] Amey Scott, *Memoirs of Mrs. Amey Scott*, 101-102.
[111] Scott, "Biographical. Mrs. Amey Scott.," 4.

further added, "I have buried a father, a brother, and a child, but have never known till now, the depth of affliction."[112] And amid his grief, he found himself a widower with four children, among them Charles, Laura, Caroline, and a four-month-old named Amey Fletcher.

The years from 1826 to 1835 were a crucial chapter in Scott's life. He continued his rise through the hierarchy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, overseeing an established church in Charlestown, cultivating an infant church in New Hampshire, revitalizing a stagnant church in Springfield, and attaining the position of presiding elder by the age of thirty. He continued to refine his techniques as a popular preacher while championing a message of personal agency, promoting urgent conversion tempered by optimistic hope, espousing a world of moral absolutes, and, most significantly, combining these three factors into an accessible message that could be understood by ordinary people. His marriage to Amey Fletcher had afforded him a wife and a partner in his ministerial labors. Her sickness had limited her capacity to help him in his ministry, but she still became a philanthropist and capable counselor for church members. And her final words– "Try to go to heaven, whatever be the expense; no sacrifice is too great for Christ" – left a powerful impression on her husband. Until that point, he had dedicated himself exclusively to the effort of bringing people to God. In the following chapters, Orange Scott continued that evangelical mission but took it a step further. He would not only show the people the way to God; he would also bring the principles of heaven and the Christian worldview directly to the world around him and make countless personal and professional sacrifices in the name of that mission.

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[112] Scott, "Biographical. Mrs. Amey Scott.," 4.

Chapter 5: Orange Scott vs. Middletown Methodism, Part 1

The majority of Orange Scott's adult life can be broadly divided into two phases that encompassed the three debates that shaped the path he took and the worldview he came to espouse. The first of these was that of the popular preacher who championed revivalism from the pulpit and camp meeting grove. This preacher further vindicated his more traditional theology from what he viewed as the dangers and excesses of modernist Christianity. The second phase was that of the abolitionist, who championed an immediate end to the institution of slavery on moral and political grounds. This second component, which dominated and defined Scott's life from 1834 through 1847, will be the central subject of the remaining chapters in this study.

It is crucial, however, to understand that these two phases were not district or disconnected. In his own view, Orange Scott the evangelist *was* Orange Scott the abolitionist. The latter phase emerged as a logical consequence of Scott's earlier work as a Methodist minister. As he became more fully integrated into antislavery circles, Scott harmonized the radical abolitionism of a William Lloyd Garrison with his own conservative religious sensibilities, ultimately forging a worldview that wove them into a singular, coherent whole.

This chapter and the subsequent one will explore what Scott later termed his "conversion" to abolitionism and his first steps to promote abolitionism within the Methodist Episcopal Church.[1] The use of the phrase conversion is significant, suggesting that Scott viewed his conversion to abolitionism as being connected with his earlier conversion to Christianity. This was not lost on Scott himself, who viewed the former as a logical and necessary extension of the latter. The years 1833-1835 were integral to this second main debate in Scott's life and

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[1] Orange Scott and Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott Compiled from His Personal Narrative, Correspondence, And Other Authentic Sources of Information* (New York: C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack, at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1847), 31.

served as an opening act in his struggle with the Methodist Episcopal Church over the peculiar institution. During these years, Scott embraced the cause of abolition and subsequently threw his ministerial and rhetorical weight behind it. This placed him in direct confrontation with leading authorities in the New England Conference, most notably Wilbur Fisk and Daniel Whedon. Orange Scott's public debate with Fisk and Whedon through the pages of the *Zion's Herald* will be the primary subject of this chapter and Chapter 6. Their argument over slavery, however, soon expanded beyond the pages of the *Zion's Herald*. Scott also took action to make the New England Conference an antislavery conference within the Methodist Episcopal Church while building and cultivating the worldview that I term "abolition Methodism."

Orange Scott offered a description of his conversion to the antislavery movement in his autobiography. This remains the only known firsthand account. The most striking characteristic of his retrospective, however, is remorse. He felt guilty that he had lived thirty-three years and spent a third of his life as a minister without voicing antislavery views. Though he had briefly criticized slavery in his debate with Thomas Whittemore, he had not made abolitionism a fixture of his worldview prior to 1833. Growing up in Vermont, Scott lived in a section of the country without slavery and spent the entirety of his life up to that point in places where slavery had little direct influence. Scott, however, did not find those excuses acceptable. "I was exceeding ignorant on the question," he wrote, adding, "I am ashamed to confess it."[2]

Moreover, Scott believed that his overall silence on slavery prior to 1833 had hurt him as a minister. Insofar as he engaged with slavery, he had generally sympathized with colonization. As he wrote in 1835, he had been "a warm supporter of the American Colonization Society"

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[2] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 31.

prior to becoming an abolitionist.[3] Later in life, he attributed his inclinations to support the colonization movement to ignorance. The historical record prior to 1833 reinforces this explanation. His first decade in the ministry was one of revivals and evangelization, not reform. He had spent so much time on conversion that he felt he had neglected the question of *how* to consistently apply his theology to the world around him. "Being wholly devoted to the one idea of saving souls," he later recalled, "I omitted to examine, faithfully and critically as I should, the condition of the country in respect to great moral evils." St. Paul became the parallel for his own antislavery conversion. Scott even invoked the imagery of Paul's epiphany on the road to Damascus.[4] He took these comparisons further, adding:

> He [St. Paul] preached Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the great reformatory principle of the age. And I felt it my duty to call the attention of my countrymen to the wrongs and outrages suffered by the wretched slaves of our land, to which I had been so long indifferent and a stranger; that by having a torch light presented to the slumbering national mind, it would be roused to see the evil and defilement of the land, and throw off this great abomination.[5]

Like Paul, Scott embraced his religious work with the zeal of a new convert and brought an energy and enthusiasm that served as both a blessing and a liability. He was unbending, unyielding, and uncompromising. Although this won him few friends, it also enabled him to contribute to the burgeoning line of demarcation between slavery and freedom in the antebellum era. Scott had long championed a world of moral absolutes and, during the mid-1830s, he began to apply this perspective to the peculiar institution.

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[3] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. 1.," *Zion's Herald*, January 7, 1835, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 2, American Periodicals, ProQuest (accessed July 26, 2022).

[4] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 31-32. St. Paul, was an instrumental figure in the early Christian Church. An early persecutor of Christians, he experienced a religious epiphany on the road to Damascus. This left him temporarily blinded and, when the scales fell from his eyes, he became an evangelist for the early Christians, especially in the Gentile world. For Paul's conversion, see Acts 7:54-8:1-3 and 9:1-30.

[5] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 32.

Scott's framing is significant because it exemplifies a recurring but crucial component to his antislavery activity: he viewed it as an extension and embodiment of his Christian worldview. Although Scott did not limit the life and crucifixion of Jesus to mere "reformatory principle," he understood the message of Jesus as one that naturally promoted reformation of the human character. Christianity was a religion, but he also saw it as a lifestyle and a worldview. At its core, religion shaped how one should view the world and how a person should respond to the great moral and political questions of the day. This remained consistent from the beginning of Scott's entry into the Methodist ministry until his death. His debate with Thomas Whittemore had fundamentally hinged on what school of Christianity was best adapted to promote moral reformation in the world. Slavery, which touched on questions of God-given rights and human depravity, therefore served as a logical extension of this earlier ministerial work.

Scott's evolution on slavery from ignorance to immediate abolitionism was a significant development not only in the story of his life, but in the history of Methodism more broadly. It highlights the way in which these two threads – his personal history and the history of his church – converged. The Orange Scott of 1833-1834 was a man at the height of his prestige and influence within the Methodist Episcopal Church, the largest evangelical church in the antebellum United States. By his thirty-second year, he had been a presiding elder for two years and been elected to represent his annual conference at a general conference. His continuous rise through the church had been steady and consistent, and none of his appointments served as setbacks to his career. Seth Sprague, Jr., an ally of Scott's, suggested as much in 1843 when he observed that Scott could have even become a bishop and reached "the height of his ambition" had he not "had a mind too pure, a heart too big with the swelling impulse of philanthropy, to

indulge in schemes of personal ambition."[6] Although a very hagiographic recounting of events from 1833-1836, Sprague's account echoes the historical record. Had the issues of slavery and abolition never become an issue for American Methodists, Scott may have easily continued his ascent to the highest rungs of the church hierarchy. His life from 1821 through 1834 was one of constant promotion. Yet he chose to walk away from that path and he instead became the foremost advocate of an unpopular cause among the leadership of the Methodist Episcopal Church. However, in doing so, he forever changed the fate of American Methodism.

Unlike Paul's relatively instantaneous conversion to Christianity, Scott's conversion to abolitionism was not completed with such rapidity. Instead, it was a more gradual process over the course of weeks and months. During the final weeks of summer in 1833, Presiding Elder Scott and his family visited Hiram H. White, who was the preacher in charge of Scott's old station in Springfield. During this visit, Scott and White discussed what they had each done during Independence Day, with White informing Scott that he had attended a meeting of the Colonization Society. The conversation immediately shifted to a discussion of slavery and abolition. Finding himself in "gross ignorance" during the conversation, Scott asked for an explanation of the Colonization Society as well as the "Garrison Society" that White had "incidentally mentioned." White's description of both movements piqued Scott's interest and inspired him to learn more. A few weeks later, while visiting Boston, he purchased works on colonization and abolition to determine which perspective and movement he would support. He spent the following year researching before he came down on the side of abolition.[7]

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[6] Seth Sprague, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott, complied from His Correspondence And Other Authentic Sources of Information* (New York: C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack, at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1848), 71.
[7] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 32-33.

Orange Scott embraced abolitionism because he was persuaded by four writers. He bought George Bourne's *Picture of Slavery*.[8] He purchased Lydia Maria Child's *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans*. Child, an essayist and writer, had been best known for her work *The Frugal Housewife* before becoming an abolitionist in the early 1830s. Scott also obtained Amos Augustus Phelps' *Lectures on Slavery, And its Remedy*. Phelps, a Yale-trained Congregational minister, had published the work for the New England Anti-Slavery Society.[9] Most importantly, Scott subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* and read his essay on colonization. Garrison was one of the central personalities in the entire antislavery movement, so much so that his name was and has become synonymous with its most radical adherents. He championed an immediate and uncompensated end to slavery, and deprecated moderation in pursuit of that goal. All four authors exposed Scott to the diverse religious and philosophical world of American abolitionism. While none of them came from the antislavery Methodist tradition like Scott, their ideals would soon come to be uniquely meshed with his own Wesleyan brand of antislavery.[10]

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[8] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 33. O. Scott, "Slavery. No. VI.," *Zion's Herald*, February 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). In 1835, Scott publicly praised Bourne's *Picture of Slavery* and said that it was "a work … which ought to be more generally known."

[9] Amos A. Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery and Its Remedy* (Boston: New-England Anti-Slavery Society, 1834), Gale, Sabin Americana (accessed August 2, 2022).

[10] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 33. Lucius Matlack, Scott's first biographer, also cited John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and Francis Asbury, a pivotal figure in early American Methodism, as sources who convinced Scott to convert to abolitionism. However, his account offers little acknowledgment of Garrison or any of the sources which Scott cited in his autobiography. Given Scott's later rivalry with Garrison, this absence might have more to do with the animosity between Matlack and the Garrisonians rather than the actual circumstances in 1833-1834. Oliver Johnson, an ally of Garrison and critic of Scott after the rift with Garrison, criticized Matlack's framing by arguing that he had tried to diminish the Garrisonian influence in favor of Methodism. Matlack had mentioned the National Anti-Slavery Society, but framed this discussion by arguing that Scott and his fellow ministers were "among the earliest" advocates for it. See Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 69-70. It is worth noting that while Bourne was not a Methodist, he was knowledgeable of Methodism and its history, discussing the southern portion of the church's shortcomings as well as John Wesley's antislavery beliefs in his *Picture of Slavery*. Bourne also wrote a biography of John Wesley. See George Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America* (Middletown, CT: E. Hunt, 1834), Gale, Sabin Americana, 210 and George Bourne, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. With Memoirs of the Wesley Family. To Which are Subjoined, Dr. Whitehead's Funeral Sermon:*

Insofar as the peculiar institution was concerned, Scott spent the better part of the next year reading about abolitionism and colonization. He found himself supportive of the “main doctrines” of the abolitionist writers and increasingly objected to the Colonization Society. “My views of the merits of the Colonization Society first became changed by reading their own reports and publications,” he wrote in 1835.[11] However, during the 1834 New England Conference in the summer, he supported laying a motion about colonization on the table. This did not mean Scott was a true neutral in the debate at that time. At camp meetings on the Providence District that year, Scott had quietly begun agitating against slavery by lobbying preachers to promote resolutions at these camp meetings calling for a public discussion of abolition and colonization within the New England Conference. The *Zion's Herald*, a weekly newspaper in Boston and the official organ of the conference, was chosen as a logical site for this conversation to take place. Published by D.H. Ela and edited by Benjamin Kingsbury, Jr., the newspaper's management was sympathetic with the abolitionist perspective, and both were on friendly terms with Scott. The envisioned discussion of slavery would pit an abolitionist spokesman against one from the colonization perspective.

Because Scott viewed abolitionism and philanthropic reform as a moral and therefore inherently religious matter, he incorporated that message into his ministerial work. As a presiding elder, he not only clamored for ministers to support opening the *Herald* to discussion of slavery; he encouraged them to become abolitionists. He brought this same attitude to the

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and A Comprehensive History of American Methodism (Baltimore, MD: Printed by George Dobbin and Murphy, for themselves, John Hagerty and Abner Neal, 1807), Gale, Sabin Americana, 283 (accessed August 2, 2022). Bourne's Wesley biography, however, did not discuss slavery in detail and had only one reference to Wesley's antislavery essay, “Thoughts Upon Slavery,” which it promoted as treating slavery “in a moral and religious view” and doing so “with great spirit and impartiality.”

[11] O. Scott, “Slavery. No. I.,” *Zion's Herald*, January 7, 1835, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 2, American Periodicals, ProQuest (accessed July 26, 2022).

camp meetings and revivals which had characterized much of his ministry. But Scott's abolitionism did not dampen or diminish his evangelical labors. He continued to organize and participate in camp meetings, such as a revival on the Needham Circuit in August 1834. One young attendee, H.C. Dunham, offered insight into what a camp meeting run by Presiding Elder Orange Scott looked and operated like, and provided a subtle glimpse into his approach to the looming questions that would define much of his life. While reflecting on the camp meeting seventy years later, Dunham noted:

> This meeting … was of a primitive type. Planks arranged upon logs afforded seats for the congregation, there was a circle of about thirty plain tents, and a rude stand was erected for the preachers. The congregation was summoned for worship by the blowing of a tin horn. I arrived at the meeting at an early stage…. The social meetings … were intensely spiritual. … Orange Scott, presiding elder of the district, presided over the meeting with dignity and grace, and preached the closing sermon Friday afternoon…. He took for his text, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' In two minutes he was at white heat, speaking with a vehemence that resembled a mountain tempest, stern and strong…. He dwelt with great vigor upon the danger of procrastination, and closed with the most powerful exhortation from the closing words of the text, the fearful lamentation: 'WE are not saved.' 'Not saved!' rang out the clarion voice of our preacher, 'not saved, not saved! What does that imply? It implies the loss of hope, the loss of happiness, the loss of heaven, yea, more, it implies the positive infliction of punishment on the neglectors of the great salvation.'[12]

After his sermon on Friday afternoon, Scott allowed "the colored brethren" to lead religious services in the evening.[13] Dunham's account of Scott's closing sermon, however, underscores the sense of urgency that had characterized his earlier evangelical calls for conversion. This sense of urgency carried from revival into reform as Scott became increasingly outspoken about issues like slavery and racism. The camp meeting left a clear impression on Dunham. "No one

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[12] H.C. Dunham, "A Camp-Meeting of the Olden Time.," *Zion's Herald*, August 3, 1904, vol. 82, no. 31, p. 975, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed March 15, 2021).

[13] Although Dunham specifically said that the evening was "given to" the Black attendees, the fact that he described their meeting in detail suggests this was not a segregated event but a space where African American Methodists were allowed to take the lead in an optional but integrated activity.

has left a richer spiritual fragrance on my memory and heart," he recalled.[14] The organization of the camp-meeting and Scott's message were a significant reason for it.

Even as he came to adopt antislavery views, Scott was still a presiding elder of the Providence District and therefore continued to hold the same obligations he had held while serving as presiding elder of the Springfield District. Given Scott's lifelong interest in revivals, the organization of quarterly meetings remained an important fixture of his presiding eldership and his vision for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Specifically, Scott emphasized what he viewed as a worrying trend in the church: a loss of interest in quarterly meetings among the ministers and laity. While a distinct issue from slavery on the surface, it explicitly shared what Scott would identify as a central problem with the peculiar institution. In both cases, people had become apathetic and indifferent towards something which should produce excitement. Quarterly meetings, which he believed "make a part of our economy," were events which "used to excite a great interest among the people."[15]

The previous generation of Methodists, by contrast, traveled miles to attend quarterly meetings and religious revivals, but convenience and complacency had changed the people and made them view religious obligations "with all the indifference of mere spectators."[16] Scott's solution to this apathy echoed his later approach to slavery; he believed aggressive ministerial action could inculcate a proper reverence in the hearts and minds of the people. In particular, he advocated extending quarterly meetings to include weekdays as well as weekends, believing that such a change would increase ministerial involvement. Additionally, he felt the move would

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[14] Dunham, "A Camp-Meeting of the Olden Time.," 975.

[15] O. Scott, "Quarterly Meetings," *Zion's Herald*, January 14, 1835, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022).

[16] Scott, "Quarterly Meetings," 4. This juxtaposition of past zeal and present complacence, it will be shown, reflected Scott's views on Christian abolitionism.

more closely link quarterly meetings with revivals and thus make church obligations an event of "special interest." For him, religious indifference among the laity was a matter for "brethren in the ministry," who he felt needed to "arise as one man, and drive from our church and congregations that little, contracted, selfish spirit, which grudges every hour spent in the worship of God unless it be on a Sunday."[17] This attitude toward quarterly meetings and revivals, in which the church and ministry led the people, shaped his views on slavery. For him, the church and the ministry existed to guide the people on great moral and religious matters. But for the church to lead, it needed to be corrected when wrong and it had to be united in action.

By October 1834, Scott made the decision that regardless of what came of the *Zion's Herald* discussion, he would write his own articles on slavery and finished what would become his first public statement on slavery in the beginning of November 1834. But when he arrived at the Springfield post office to mail his article to the *Zion's Herald*, he received a letter from Ela informing him that he had been chosen by "the Anti-Slavery friends" to represent their cause.[18] In an instant, his essay on slavery would eventually, after some revisions in the weeks that followed, become the first salvo of a public battle for the soul of the New England Conference.

Scott did not confine his abolitionism to the *Zion's Herald*. His objective, to awaken members and ministers of his church to the evils of slavery, required a more comprehensive strategy. He did not simply want to *discuss* slavery; he wanted to *win* that debate. As a result, he turned to William Lloyd Garrison for help in December. "I am a Methodist preacher, member of the New England Conference, and Presiding Elder of Providence District," Scott introduced himself, adding that he shared "a deep interest in the cause…." Beyond establishing contact with an important ally in the antislavery movement, Scott wrote Garrison with certain objects in mind.

[17] Scott, "Quarterly Meetings," 4.
[18] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 34.

First, he asked if Garrison could furnish him with “one hundred copies of the Liberator, for three o[r] six months to give away” at “the rate of $1 per year.” While Scott had already intended to distribute the newspaper among the ministers in Providence District, he had far greater ambitions than changing one district. He wanted to transform the entire conference and he saw the *Liberator* as a means to accomplish that end.[19]

Second, Scott wished to inform Garrison of his overarching plans. Although Garrison was already aware of Scott and some of his antislavery actions by December 1834, he and Scott had never become acquainted.[20] For his part, Scott wanted to bring abolitionism of the Garrisonian stamp to the pages of the *Zion’s Herald* and the Methodist Episcopal Church more broadly. Scottite abolitionism, as will be illustrated in this chapter and the next one, was an intellectual grandchild of Garrison’s brand of abolitionism but filtered through and influenced by a deeply Methodist and Wesleyan tradition. Scott, however, also made his admiration for Garrison explicit. “You are my brother in the name of the Lord,” he wrote, adding that, “you have fought well, and you shall conquer. Thousands are flying to your standard.” The struggle against slavery was a war, and Scott implored Garrison to “Hold out a little longer” so he could deliver him “an army.” The Methodist Episcopal Church was to be that army. “I am determined to bring the subject of abolition before the ministry and people,” he wrote, informing Garrison of

[19] Orange Scott and William Lloyd Garrison. "Letter from Orange Scott, Springfield, [Massachusetts], to William Lloyd Garrison, 1836 Dec[ember] 30." Correspondence. Springfield, Massachusetts, December 30, 1836. *Digital Commonwealth*, https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/2z1118907 (accessed August 12, 2022). Although this manuscript is dated by the Boston Public Library as being December 30, 1834, this letter is actually from December 30, 1834. The events Scott describes only make sense for 1834, since he was no longer living in Springfield after 1835, and the events he described took place between December 1834 and the spring of 1835. Moreover, Scott was no longer presiding elder of Providence District after the summer of 1836.

[20] “Slavery in Tennessee.,” *Liberator*, December 13, 1834, vol. 4, no. 50, p. 50, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 7, 2022). In this editorial, Garrison criticized proslavery Methodists and remarked at the end that “The most strenuous exertions of such men as Rev. Geo[rge] Storrs, J.[ared] Perkins, Orange Scott, and others of their stamp and spirit, are necessary to counteract the powerful support which slavery receives from the Methodist ministry.” This indicates that Garrison knew of Scott, and that Scott had already begun to earn a reputation as an abolitionist by the end of 1834.

his plans to write for the *Zion's Herald*. Although unsure at the time of writing to Garrison if the *Herald* would publish his communications, he forwarded a copy of his first article and asked Garrison to consider publishing it in the *Liberator* if it would serve "the cause of Christian philanthropy."[21]

Five weeks later, on February 7, 1835, the first *Liberator* number was sent to Scott's hundred ministers, coupled with a brief article from Scott to explain his intentions. Scott's essay for the *Liberator*, written amid his antislavery communications in the *Zion's Herald*, explained to the one hundred ministers what he had done for them and why. He hoped the paper would give them accessible information about slavery and praised it for publishing material hostile to its own editorial views. "All I ask," he implored the ministers, "is that you read the paper weekly; read it for *my sake*, if you have no other motive for doing so."[22] Scott's announcement to the ministers, however, offers further insight into his overarching worldview. The views he succinctly expressed in the *Liberator* would characterize his debate in the *Zion's Herald* with anti-abolitionists and colonizationists in three major ways.

First, Scott viewed religion and abolitionism as fundamentally interconnected, with the latter emerging as a logical outgrowth of the former. Ministers played an integral role in bringing the message of abolitionism to the people. "This is a question that should interest not only the patriot, but the philanthropist and the christian," he wrote, asking, "Shall the minister of the gospel leave this subject wholly with the cold politician? God forbid it." Second, Scott believed that the church and its ministers were the prime movers in reform movements. He argued, "No class of men can do more to enlighten and change public sentiment than ministers of the gospel,

[21] Orange Scott and William Lloyd Garrison. "Letter from Orange Scott, Springfield, [Massachusetts], to William Lloyd Garrison, 1836 Dec[ember] 30."
[22] O. Scott, "To the Members of the New-England Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Liberator*, February 7, 1835, vol. 5, no. 6, p. 1-2, Accessible Archives (accessed 8/15/2022).

and no class of men are more responsible." Scottite reform required cooperation from religious and secular institutions, but the church held a distinguished position at the vanguard. Third, Scott's brand of abolitionism, like Garrison's, included a deeply moral and emotional concern for the plight of enslaved Americans. He opposed the racism and racial determinism that not only served as a justification for chattel slavery; he also condemned it as a matter of religious principle. Human beings, white or Black, were equal before God. Scott, however, sought to consistently apply this precept. His attitudes respecting race challenged established norms of white supremacy. "They are intellectual beings, and have souls as well as whites," he said of his fellow "two millions of citizens...."[23] And with few exceptions, most ministers read Scott's appeal and appeared to at the least offer the *Liberator* a hearing.[24]

Scott's debate with the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery, abolition, and colonization continued through the rest of his life but must be understood as unfolding over a series of episodes. These episodes are an important mechanism toward understanding the contours and character of the overarching debate because they were influenced by Scott's actions as well as the identities of his principal antagonists. As the circumstances in Scott's life and the politics of church and state changed, so too did his overall agenda. He debated these issues with many prominent Methodists during the 1830s and 1840s, and these men were not monolithic. They each had their own beliefs and attitudes. Some were colonizationists; some were sympathetic to emancipation but opposed Scott's perceived radicalism; and even more identified as "anti-abolitionists," those individuals committed to stopping an antislavery movement that

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[23] Scott, "To the Members of the New-England Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.," 1-2.
[24] C.V. Caples, "Reply to Rev. Louis Jansen," *Liberator*, April 25, 1835, vol. 5, no. 17, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 7, 2022). This article shows that one minister, Louis Jansen, refused to read the *Liberator* and returned it, making a very public spectacle of the event. C.V. Caples took to the pages of the *Liberator* to excoriate Jansen. By refusing to take up Scott's offer, Caples argued that Jansen "indicates to me that he 'chooses darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.'"

they feared would inevitably tear asunder institutions of church and state. This chapter will chronicle and analyze the remainder of this first episode in this debate: from January 1835 through the New England annual conference at Lynn, Massachusetts that summer.

During this first part of the clash over slavery in the church, Scott found himself on opposite sides with Wilbur Fisk and Daniel Whedon, two important and influential members of the New England Conference. Eight years Scott's senior, Fisk had followed a similar path as Scott. He entered the ministry in 1818 and had preceded Scott as an earlier minister in charge of the Charlestown station, having served as its first preacher. Like Scott, he was elected to attend his first general conference at thirty-one years of age. By 1835, Fisk had spent 17 years of his 43 years in the Methodist ministry.[25] But where Scott had embraced the path of an evangelist, Fisk favored intellectual pursuits. He entered Vermont University in 1814 before the War of 1812 forced him to transfer to Brown University and graduated with honors the following year. Counting Thaddeus Stevens among his associates, a young Fisk had planned to study law and enter politics but instead joined the ministry in 1818.[26] In 1824, Fisk had been chosen by the New England Conference as principal of Wesleyan University at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, and, in 1832, he was asked to establish another Wesleyan University in Middleton. His speech to commemorate the opening of this new university, "The Science of Education," emphasized the role of literary institutions in promoting what he called the "spirit of reform." Fisk, it should be noted, was a philanthropic man who was deeply conservative in the sense that he had paramount

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[25] "Minutes of the Session of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Centennial Edition," Gale, Sabin Americana, Boston, J.B. Magee, 1896, p. 106, 128 (accessed July 25, 2022). Fisk attended the 1824 conference, where Scott's first conference was in 1832. The "Roll of Honored Dead" includes biographical information on Wilbur Fisk, including the year he entered the ministry, the year of his death, and the years he was in the ministry. John McClintock's "Sketches of eminent Methodist ministers," Gale, Sabin Americana, New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1854 (accessed July 25, 2022), offers a chapter dedicated to Wilber Fisk.

[26] O.H. Tiffany, "Wilbur Fisk," in John McClintock, *Sketches of eminent Methodist ministers*, 253-255.

faith that education and reason could bring about the gradual reformation of humanity and, in turn, contribute to the steady improvement of the world. "True philosophy has in it nothing of *party* or *caste*," he declared in his speech, adding the pursuit of greater learning helped further the "religious enterprises of the Christian church," most notably by advocating on behalf of the principle of counting "every man a brother."[27]

In many respects, Fisk and Scott seemed to appear natural allies. Both were young prodigies in the New England Conference who had rapidly risen through the ranks of the church hierarchy. They both sought to promote reform and improve society by bringing about a change in the hearts and minds of the people: Scott through evangelization and Fisk through education. And both men certainly held a great deal of respect for one another. It had been Fisk who helped convince Scott to accept the responsibility of the Charlestown station when Scott felt himself unworthy of serving there. Fisk, like Scott, had faced similar reservations about moving to Massachusetts from Vermont. And the New England Conference had elevated them both to the rank of presiding elder at thirty years old.[28] Yet the differences between the two men became increasingly apparent as they assumed opposing positions on abolitionism. Fisk, a dues-paying member of the Vermont Colonization Society and a colonizationist since the 1820s, feared abolitionism was an existential threat to the nation and the Methodist Church.[29] The debate between Scott and Fisk, in addition to being a microcosm for the general rivalry between abolition and colonization, provides a window into the burgeoning rift among northern Methodists. These Methodists did not necessarily see slavery as a positive good; in many

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[27] Wilbur Fisk, "The science of education: an inaugural address delivered at the opening of the Wesleyan University, in Middletown, Connecticut, September 21, 1831," New York: M'Elrath and Bangs, Printers, 1832, Gale, Sabin Americana (accessed July 25, 2022), 2-6.
[28] Tiffany, "Wilbur Fisk," 258-260.
[29] "Annual Report of the Vermont Colonization Society," Gale, Sabin Americana, (Burlington, VT: C. Goodrich, 1826), 7 (accessed July 25, 2022).

respects, they despised it. The real dispute, then, revolved around the question of what they as Christian ministers were to do about it.

Daniel Whedon was born on March 20, 1808 in Onondaga, New York. He studied and graduated with honors from Hamilton College before becoming a teacher at the Cazenovia Seminary in New York and a tutor for his alma mater. Eventually, he joined Fisk at Wesleyan University in 1833 as a professor of ancient languages and instructor in philosophy and literature. Bradford K. Pierce, one of Whedon's many students over his decade at Wesleyan University, later recalled that he was well-regarded among the student body. "He was very popular among us," Pierce wrote, adding that Whedon was the rare professor who cultivated relationships with his students and even spent his early years as a professor living on campus alongside them.[30] Like Fisk, Whedon favored colonization and, although uncomfortable with slavery, deprecated abolitionism. As will be shown in this chapter, he shared Fisk's objections and, alongside his Middletown colleague, presented a united front against Scott's immediatism.

This initial discussion over slavery, abolition, and colonization in the *Herald*, spanning hundreds of articles across the tenure of two different editors, took on a life of its own as more abolitionists and anti-abolitionists joined the fray. This increasingly fractured the unity and cohesion of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and revealed the stark differences over the peculiar institution held by ministers and members alike. Orange Scott not only contributed to this debate; he was the man who unleashed it.

On January 3, 1835, the Boston Wesleyan Association met at the *Zion's Herald* office at No. 19 Washington Street in Boston, Massachusetts, to discuss opening the paper to a discussion of slavery. This meeting, held in response to quarterly meeting pressure from Scott and other

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[30] "Editorial Comment.," *Zion's Herald*, vol. 60, no. 24, p. 8, ProQuest, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed July 26, 2022). Bradford K. Pierce was editor of the *Zion's Herald*, and wrote a tribute to Whedeon after his death in 1885.

ministers, acceded to their request. At the meeting, the Association unanimously resolved that "the columns of Zion's Herald be opened to communications temperately discussing the subjects of Slavery, Colonization, and Emancipation" with the only caveat being that authors published under their own name. Four days later, the *Herald* commenced this discussion, with editor Benjamin Kingsbury, Jr. announcing this "series of articles" would begin with essays by Scott.[31]

Orange Scott's maiden article on January 7, 1835, the first in a series of fifteen essays, was written and mailed to the *Herald* a week earlier on December 30, 1834. In some respects, Scott emulated the model he had used during his debate with Thomas Whittemore eight years earlier. He methodically built an overarching argument over the course of a series of articles but engaged Fisk and Whedon more than he had Whittemore. He relished the idea of the debate because the *Herald* was committed to "presenting both sides." "Slavery No. I" as he titled it, served primarily as an introduction of sorts to this "all-important subject" and a manifesto for his brand of abolitionism.[32] His central objects were to inform readers why he was writing and what he believed in. This prospectus for the articles that would follow also reveals Scott's state of mind. The consistent feature of his life after 1820 had been advancing what he saw as the cause of God. Over the years, this cause was increasingly broadened beyond the narrow denominational confines of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It became an ecumenical, universal crusade for Christian evangelization and the moral fruits of reform that came from that worldview. In doing this, Scott harmonized the competing strains of antislavery thought in antebellum America with his own religious sensibilities. He wove the radical Garrisonian impulse for egalitarianism, the pragmatic considerations of the more conservative abolitionists,

[31] "Slavery, &c.," *Zion's Herald*, January 7, 1835, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[32] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," *Zion's Herald*, January 7, 1835, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

and an overarching concern for the well-being of African Americans, into a singular, coherent whole through the framework of a uniquely Wesleyan abolitionism. But at the same time, his aggressive tone, his intractable positions, and his zeal further polarized an already polarizing subject within his church.

In many respects, Orange Scott's "Slavery No. I" adopted a similar style, tone, and framing as William Lloyd Garrison's better known "To the Public" article from January 1, 1831. Garrison, one of the most important figures in shaping Scott's abolitionism in its formative years, left a clear influence on the way Scott thought and acted. Although not a copy in either tone or content, the essays each revealed a unity of purpose. This unity stemmed from a shared conviction that one must present a stark contrast with moral evil and offer no compromise or quarter in the contest with it. Garrison famously argued that the *Liberator*, his own platform, would serve as "the standard of emancipation" and that he would use any language, however, severe to bring about the cause of abolition.[33] Urgency was crucial. "Is there not cause for severity?" he had asked in 1831, adding, "Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm…." And in the pursuit of that goal, Garrison expressed a willingness, perhaps even an eagerness, to be reviled and hated for his beliefs. "Let southern oppressors tremble," he declared, "let their secret abettors tremble – let their northern apologists tremble – let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble." Driven by a belief that great evil required radical solutions, he further took aim at what he considered "the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition." He cared little for people who objected to his "standard" because he advanced God's "truth" and was convinced that "posterity will bear testimony that I was right."[34]

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[33] William Lloyd Garrison, "To the Public," *Liberator*, January 1, 1831, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[34] Garrison, "To the Public," 1.

Scott largely shared Garrison's understanding of the issue of slavery, except insofar as he defined immediate abolition. Nevertheless, Scott, like Garrison, believed that his cause was the cause of God, and he framed his moral crusade as an obligation. "What I do is from a conviction of duty," he declared, adding that he chose to write for the *Herald* in the service of "the cause of Christian philanthropy" because "I am not willing, however, longer to slumber over an evil of such magnitude and importance." The scale of this great moral issue, in Scott's view, warranted the use of "somewhat severe" language. Like his debate with Whittemore, however, Scott tempered this severity and sought to confine it to ideas and principles rather than the people who espoused them. "I shall not court opposition by using harsh epithets, or knowing[ly] misrepresenting the sentiments of any," he conceded before asserting that "I propose to deal principally in *facts* and *arguments*." Although Scott never perfectly adhered to this rule, his intention illustrated one central difference with Garrison. Even in that difference, however, Scott admitted that "heated and rash" abolitionists could not be faulted in their rhetoric because "who can be phlegmatic in such a cause?"[35] But, as with many things that differentiated the two men, this difference was one of disposition rather than direction.

Like Garrison, Scott saw his role as awakening the consciences of readers and galvanizing them to action. It was, as he later put it, the role of "having a torch light presented to the slumbering national mind" and stemmed from a confidence that the people would act rightly once the truth was brought to light. As such, he shared Garrison's lack of concern for how the debate reflected on him personally. "If I accomplish no more than to arouse the slumbering pens and intellects of even some small portion of the community," he wrote in "Slavery No. I," "it will be as much, perhaps, as I can reasonably expect." Like Garrison, Scott believed he answered

[35] Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," 2.

to a higher power and accepted the burdens that his activism entailed. If support for abolitionism made him "unpopular," Scott wrote at the end of his article, "I am willing to be unpopular … I have nothing to fear or hope either from the north or south."[36]

The thrust of Scott's inaugural article rested on outlining his overarching antislavery worldview. Insofar as first principles were concerned, Scott remained largely consistent over the course of his life. They did not change over the years; rather, he adapted them to the changing circumstances around him. In 1835, this meant that he prioritized pushing the Methodist Episcopal Church to take institutional action against slavery. And to do that he used his articles to undermine colonization as an acceptable alternative to abolitionism as well as inculcate an abolitionist mindset within the New England Conference. In pursuing both objectives, Scott ultimately championed a unique framework for social reform that sought to reconcile and combine the competing intellectual forces behind abolitionism, its rival poles of radicalism and conservatism, and its religious and republican dimensions. This vision of society that Scott promulgated extended beyond the institution of slavery and raised larger questions about what it meant to be a religious person in a secular, republican society. And it further raised questions about the very role of religious institutions in such a society. For Scott, then, republicanism and religiosity were not diametrically opposing forces. They were two sides of the same coin and two forces which needed to act in unison to promote his view of a better, more just society. And slavery was the issue which brought that vision to the forefront.

To accomplish these ends, Scott first began with a definition of terms. This entailed an explanation as to why he rejected colonization and a description of his understanding of immediate abolitionism. Colonization, he argued, was a fundamentally flawed movement both in

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[36] Orange Scott, *The Life of Orange Scott*, 31. O. Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," *Zion's Herald*, January 7, 1835, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

terms of principle and practicality. In "Slavery No. I," Scott outlined two principal and interconnected objections to colonization. First, he decried its monopoly on antislavery discourse. "It is brought forward as the only and all sufficient medium through which slavery can be abolished," he complained, adding that colonizationists refused to "interfere with the question of Slavery at all."[37] By holding a stranglehold on the antislavery mantle, colonization stifled and chilled discourse over other, more principled alternatives.

Second, and most importantly, the very idea of colonization rested on a faulty premise. It held contempt for African Americans, believing the solution to the problem of slavery and the racial animosity it inevitably had created meant racial separation and mass deportation of Blacks. Colonizationists, in his view, held that "blacks have no right to this country," and he cited that as being one of his "many very serious objections to it." By contrast, Scott envisioned a society which embraced Christian philanthropy and multiracial harmony. "However useful this society may be to free blacks … to the natives of Africa," he wrote, "it never will, it never can essentially ameliorate the condition of our American citizens who are bound in the chains of Slavery." From his very first public statement on slavery, Scott viewed all African Americans as citizens of the United States, underscoring a fundamental equality between whites and Blacks which would characterize his antislavery worldview.[38]

He again emphasized the citizenship of slaves later in the article when dismissing colonizationist fears about overpopulation. "There is room enough in North America for all its citizens," he countered. He would frequently use similiar phrases in the essays and years that followed to undermine the very premise that slaves were slaves, and challenge readers to

[37] Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," 2.

[38] Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," 2. Although Scott did not completely agree with Garrison, their brands of abolitionism were nevertheless deeply aligned in that they both saw slavery as a moral evil and held a shared commitment to the rights of African Americans.

acknowledge the humanity behind the labels. Like Garrison, who sought "the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population," Scott believed that slavery was only part of a larger problem. Colonization, then, did not solve the underlying issues behind slavery because it fundamentally sought to evade rather than address them. And this scheme was as impracticable as it was immoral. "To think of ever removing the entire colored population of our country to Africa," he declared, "is as idle as the wind, and as cruel as it is idle." Slaves and free Blacks, he reasoned, were American in every sense of the term. They were born in America, they labored in America and cultivated its soil, and they served their country and their fellow citizens. These facts pointed to an obvious conclusion. "This is their HOME."[39]

The second objective of "Slavery No. I" was to define abolitionism. Prefacing his remarks with the admission that some abolitionists held views or opinions that he did not share, Scott nevertheless proclaimed, "I hesitate not to declare myself an *abolitionist*" because he shared the "*main doctrines*." Scott's desire to find common ground with other abolitionists under the umbrella of main doctrines is significant because he would continue to seek cooperation among abolitionists irrespective of denominational, geographical, political, or policy differences. The urgency of the times necessitated this unity. In a similar vein to Garrison's "cause for severity," Scott believed the stakes were indeed high in 1835. And like Garrison, Scott believed the free states were partly to blame. Abolitionists had been "grossly misrepresented, and most violently traduced and opposed" by "many northern periodicals" that regarded "the subject of Slavery [as] too sacred to touch, ..." This led Scott to a simple conclusion. "In sentiment we are slave holders in the north as well as in the south!" he proclaimed, adding that while all people might admit "Slavery is an *evil*" only a "few among us seem to have any adequate sense of the

[39] Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," 2.

magnitude of that evil!"[40] Although Scott did not agree with Garrison in all matters, they both understood the extent and scope of the problem.

Like many other abolitionists, Scott identified himself as an immediatist. In 1835, his understanding of that term differed yet overlapped with others. To explain his understanding of the term, he wrote:

> I am, Mr. Editor, in favor of *immediate emancipation*. But permit me here to explain what I mean by that *term*. I mean that the work should be immediately *commenced*, - that the fetters and chains of the slaves should be immediately *loosened*, - that measures should be immediately adopted to *educate* them, - that laws should be immediately enacted which shall recognize them as *citizens*, - laws which shall allow them their oath, and recognize them in civil matters the same as the whites, - laws which shall protect them from stripes, unreasonable labor, hunger or nakedness, - laws which shall preserve them from being robbed of their companions and children, and which shall preserve and defend their virtue and chastity. I mean also, that at the *earliest possible period, consistent with the best good of the slaves, they shall be FULLY EMANCIPATED*. With respect to that period there are different opinions; and on this subject you may, perhaps, hear something more from me before I am through with my intended numbers.[41]

Although these views may have put him at odds with some abolitionists, Scott shared their ends. For Scott, the destination was far more important than the route. His end goal of complete political and legal equality between whites and Blacks underscores a far more crucial point. The abolition of slavery was simply the means to a more egalitarian end. Scott did not confine his understanding of abolitionism to the mere end of slavery; he saw it as a first and important step towards creating a more equal and just society. Abolition, then, meant abolishing the shackles of slavery and the legal and political fetters of racial inequality.

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[40] Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," 2. Like Scott, Garrison's "To the Public" complained of northern anti-abolitionism. "I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, apathy more frozen, than among slave owners themselves," he wrote. Scott, likewise, lambasted the same apathy. "We sleep over the bondage and sufferings of more than TWO MILLIONS of our American citizens, as sweetly, and with as much composure, as though ours (as it professes to be) were indeed a land of liberty!"
[41] Scott, "Slavery. No. I.," 2.

Two weeks later, on January 21, 1835, the newspaper published a second Scott article on slavery. Where the first article sought to explain his objections to colonization and offer an overview of his understanding of abolitionism, "Slavery No. II" prioritized raising awareness of the institution of slavery itself. It cited eight cases of slaveholder cruelty towards slaves to illustrate the "*tyranny in practice*." In this sense, Scott did not necessarily pioneer a novel perspective on slavery; he reproduced accounts that could be found elsewhere. Thankful to the "various sources" that composed the firsthand accounts in his article, Scott listed case after case of slaveholder cruelty in quick succession.[42] Scott's motive and reasoning was personal in nature. He believed that most American Methodists, and those in the New England Conference specifically, were as ignorant of slavery as he had been prior to 1833. He attributed this ignorance to two sources: prejudice and a lack of resources. These factors led to "a very limited circulation" of anecdotes illustrating slavery's abuses. This premise led him to conclude, "The horrible acts perpetrated in the South and West, ought to be known in the North."[43] Since many of these anecdotes had been published elsewhere, Scott's role in the discussion was transferring antislavery discourse from the pages of a *Liberator* to the pages of a *Zion's Herald*, where those ideas could gain exposure with a wider audience.

Given Scott's popularity as a preacher with the Methodist laity, he carefully cultivated a selection of anecdotes which he felt would build the most persuasive case for what he termed

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[42] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," *Zion's Herald*, January 21, 1835, vol. 6, no. 3, p. 2, American Periodicals, ProQuest (accessed July 26, 2022). Some of these anecdotes, which dealt with "A wealthy citizen of Georgia," the story of "A respectable gentleman," and the story of Lilburn Lewis, were likely derived from John Rankin's letters to Thomas Rankin. John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister from Ohio, had the letters published in the *Liberator* in 1832. William Lloyd Garrison then published them as a collection in 1833. See John Rankin, *Letters on American Slavery, Addressed to Mr. Thomas Rankin* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1833). The original account for the remaining five of eight anecdotes in "Slavery No. II," however, could not be located, either because the original source no longer exists or because Scott, by his own admission, so heavily abridged them as to no longer be recognizable.

[43] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2.

"the common people." Together, these stories created a succinct and indicting portrait. The accounts depicted slavery as a rapacious institution that corrupted its practitioners and left its victims at their absolute mercy. Women, Scott argued, faced some of the greatest abuses of slavery. Four of his eight anecdotes dealt exclusively with women, and two were ambiguous about the slave's sex. One of these anecdotes highlighted that a woman beaten to death at a whipping post was a young mother and noted that "*a new born babe died with her*!" Three cases addressed legal injustices, specifically as it related to extralegal justice and the inability of Blacks to testify against whites. "It is true the master was to blame," one anecdote observed, before concluding that "the law was *powerless*."[44] But on the other extreme, these legal examples pointed to the fact that the law had been designed to make slaveholders untouchable.

Three cases dealt with the poor conditions that male and female slaves faced, including issues like excessive workload, being at the mercy of overseers, and the poor living and working conditions that promoted disease. Two highlighted the faith of slaveholders, depicting them as hypocrites and portraying their actions as being incompatible with the religion that they professed. One was a woman who abused her slaves yet sat in church "as demure as a popish nun" while the other was a minister who whipped his slaves before and after his Sunday preaching. In all instances, slaveholders were depicted as apathetic and uncaring. Scott promoted the stories in such a way as to capture the humanity of slaves. Seven of the eight cases involved violence, usually described in graphic terms.[45]

Ultimately, Scott wanted to show readers that abuse was inherent in slavery by its very nature. But the magnitude of moral evil did not end there. Scott selected cases which highlighted

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[44] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2.
[45] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2. Six of the eight dealt with slaves facing abuse from their masters, while another looked at a runaway slave who was "deliberately shot by his pursuers while trying to hide from them in a tree.

not only the cruelty in the ordinary functions of a slave society, but also the depravity and sadism that slavery inevitably cultivated. Three cases fell into this category. One example was a Georgia planter who psychologically tormented his female slaves and drove them to commit suicide. This abuse was not confined to male slaveholders alone. In the second of these anecdotes, Scott informed his readers of the story of "Mrs. H.," who tortured her slaves. This account, described the woman's Sunday morning ritual:

> She had a post in the yard to which she pinioned the girls, and after scouring them … would sprinkle them with the usual mixture of salt, vinegar, &c., leave them fastened, - exposed to the sun and flies, - walk to church … and after service repeat her flogging, or not, according to her whim.[46]

While most examples linked abuse with work, the case of "Mrs. H." stands out because because her actions had nothing to do with a failure on the part of the slaves. She inflicted pain and suffering not because she felt she *needed* to do so, but because she *wanted* to hurt her slaves. And she could do so on Sundays without interfering with her self-interest because the slaves could not work on Sundays anyway. This case was, in Scott's view, "a memorable specimen of *slave-holding Christianity*."[47]

In the third of these cases, which Scott chose as the final example and the one he wished to leave freshest in the minds of his readers, came from John Rankin's letters on slavery. These letters, which first appeared in the *Liberator* before being published as a book, offered an

[46] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2. Although the original account of "Mrs. H." cannot be found, a woman identified as "Mrs. H." would appear in Theodore Dwight Weld's *Slavery As It Is.* In that work, Weld attempted a similar undertaking to Scott and Rankin but on an even larger scale, compiling hundreds of accounts of slaveholder abuses. In one instance, Weld cited the case of a "Mrs. H." who he identified as being from "Courtland" and "a member of the Presbyterian church" who sent a slave girl to jail because she believed the girl was plotting to poison her. Weld quoted "Mrs. H." as proclaiming that she would "cut Arthur Tappan's throat from ear to ear." These quotes, as well as her membership in a church, suggest the Mrs. H. from Weld's book and Scott's article are one and the same. See Theodore Dwight Weld, *Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), Gale Primary Sources, Gale, Sabin Americana, p. 47 (accessed August 2, 2022).
[47] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2.

account which Rankin received from Rev. William Dickey.[48] This account told the story of a Kentucky slaveholder named Lilburn Lewis, a grandson of Thomas Jefferson. Lewis brutally murdered a seventeen-year-old slave named George because he had dropped a pitcher of water. After gathering the slaves and building a "rousing fire":

> George was called up, and by the assistance of his younger brother, laid on a broad bench or block. The master then cut off his feet with a broad axe…. Having cast the feet into the fire, he [Lewis] lectured the negroes at some length. He then proceeded to cut off his limbs below the knees…. The master went on thus until trunk, arms and head were all in the fire…. When he retired, his wife exclaimed, - "O! Mr. Lewis … what have you done!" He said he had never enjoyed himself so well at a ball as he had that evening.[49]

Lewis was ultimately held accountable for the murder of George, committing suicide because his neighbors testified against him. Although justice had been done in this case, Scott offered his own pessimistic editorial conclusion. Namely, the entire slave system was built on injustices that made men like Lilburn Lewis possible. Scott surmised that Lewis could have easily framed his slaves for George's murder had his neighbors not been witnesses. Slaveholders, he noted, could unleash their cruelest and most depraved impulses without any genuine fear of legal backlash because "A slave-holder can cut the throat of a slave in the presence of an hundred other slaves" and evade justice so long as he did it without a single white witness.[50] By making this argument against slavery in practice, "Slavery No. II" introduced what would become a recurring theme for Scott: that slavery was a grave moral evil – a sin against God – in all circumstances.

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[48] John Rankin, *Letters on American Slavery, Addressed to Mr. Thomas Rankin* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1833), Gale Primary Sources, Sabin Americana, p. 61-62 (accessed August 2, 2022). For Dickey's account of Lilburn Lewis, see Rankin, 61-65. The *Genius of Universal Emancipation* also covered this story. See *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, January 25, 1825, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 59, ProQuest (accessed August 2, 2022). Given Scott's Garrisonian connections, however, it is more likely that Scott derived this account from either the *Liberator* or Rankin's book.

[49] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2. Scott removed some graphic details from this account, specifically as related to the dismemberment of George. Given the details which Scott chose to include, these omissions likely stemmed from brevity rather than any desire to sanitize the story. Most omissions simply condensed the story so it could be told within the confines of the article's limits.

[50] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," *2*.

Moreover, the familial relationship between Lewis and Jefferson was not lost on Dickey, Rankin, or Scott, who each highlighted the connection. Scott, however, ended the account of Lewis by adding Thomas Jefferson's famous quote from his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in which he said, "I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just!" In an important symbolic gesture, Scott immediately followed the quote from Jefferson with a quote from John Wesley. This quotation, taken from the final pages of Wesley's antislavery essay, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, challenged Christians and practitioners of slavery and the slave trade to "put a stop to its cry before it be too late."[51] Scott's decision to place Jefferson and Wesley beside one another is noteworthy. To him, both the author of the Declaration of Independence and the founder of Methodism each espoused the same point. Both men explicitly warned of God's wrath for the horrors of slavery. They each acknowledged a collective dimension to slavery, with Jefferson noting that the sin of slavery fell on his "country" while Wesley chastised readers who justified their own sins by claiming that those sins were forced upon them by their fathers.[52] This conclusion afforded Scott the opportunity to highlight the sense of urgency that he had alluded to in "Slavery No. I." But, most importantly, it demonstrated that he saw the liberal and republican ideals of the United States as existing in perfect harmony with the religious ideals of Wesleyanism and Methodism. The ideas of a republican America and a Christian nation could not only coexist alongside one another; to him, they were two sides of the same coin.

"Slavery No. III," which appeared in the *Zion's Herald* on January 28, 1835, continued in the same vein as "Slavery No. II." It sought to offer more concrete evidence of slavery as it

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[51] Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2. John Wesley, quoted in Scott, "Slavery. No. II.," 2. John Wesley's appeal was not confined strictly to Methodism. His appeal urged people to act regardless of "Whether you are a *Christian* or no." For the full text of the passage that Scott cites., see John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London: R. Hawes, 1774), Gale Primary Sources, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, p. 25-27 (accessed August 2, 2022).
[52] Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 26-27.

existed, and what Scott termed its "legitimate fruits." This served as a logical continuation of his second article, and the anecdotes which he selected for his audience were once again designed to shock the sensibilities of readers by presenting a purportedly unvarnished account of slavery. He hoped that these two articles had, as he would write a few weeks later, offer insight into the experiences that "our colored Americans have endured." If such accounts "defy human credulity," he assured readers that he had only exposed them to "*FACTS*," specifically those which "will be found at the *last day* … facts written in characters of *BLOOD*." It was slavery reduced to its base components. "Slavery, in its mildest form, is bondage and oppression," he wrote before observing that "in its worst form, its victims die a thousand deaths in dying one." However, these anecdotes were not meant simply to rebut the trope of the benevolent or Christian slaveholder; they promoted the idea that slavery was inherently rooted in violence and inevitably led to moral depravity. In an estimation "far too favorable on the part of slaveholders," Scott surmised that one in every twenty slaves suffered cruelties like the accounts he had furnished with at least "one hundred thousand" people sharing those experiences.[53]

Offering greater clarity to his readers as to the reason why he chose to show them those graphic episodes, Scott explained, "slave-owners and slave-drivers treat *human beings* with much less mercy than most people treat their beasts." Scott's italic emphasis of the phrase "*human beings*" is essential because he cited accounts which emphasized the humanity of the slaves and inversely highlighted the ways in which slaveholders had ceased to act as human beings. Scott's account of Lilburn Lewis had named George, the victim of his brutality. In "Slavery No. III," he ended his series of seven anecdotes with the account of a slave named Kate,

[53] O. Scott, "Slavery No. III.," *Zion's Herald*, vol. 6, no. 4, p. 2., ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). O. Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," *Zion's Herald*, February 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

who was confined to stocks for 18 days and subsequently worked to death upon her release.[54] Both George and Kate's stories stand out from the rest because he named them. By selecting accounts that gave victims a name, Scott forced his readers to confront the reality that the slaves in the stories were not faceless: they were flesh-and-blood human beings, and slavery had cut their lives short. And with relatively common, European names like "George" and "Kate," the primarily white New England readership of the *Zion's Herald* could experience an even closer connection with them.

Of the seven new accounts that appeared in "Slavery No. III," four dealt with the subject of violence against women and, taken in conjunction with "Slavery No. II," illustrate a gendered component in Scott's curation of the anecdotes. Another account expressly adopted a chivalric dimension, in which a southern carpenter identified as "K." confronted a slaveholder named "Mr. S." when he was flogging a female slave. This woman, "naked to the loins, tied by the neck to a rail of the fence," was saved only through the protection of "K." The account framed "K." as a metaphorical knight by invoking that he protected the slave woman by putting her under the protection of "his shield." Ultimately, "K." confronted Mr. S., standing up for the woman's honor and reportedly declaring, "Strike the girl again and I will fell you to the earth." Mr. S. and "K." eventually fought, allowing the woman to escape. But the way which "K." and Mr. S. spoke of the female slave is illustrative. Where "K." was willing to fight to protect her honor, Mr. S. simply referred to her as "that bitch." A key element to these stories was the way in which the peculiar institution degraded women. To show another extreme example, Scott relayed an account of an old slave in Kentucky who was beaten to death. Not only did slavery harm women; it abused the elderly. At the intersection of these two identities stood a third account in which a

[54] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2.

Kentucky mistress tore the eyeball from an old female slave and left her with "one of her eyeballs hanging on her cheek!" Slavery, according to Scott, preyed on the most vulnerable in society, including the "innocent females and children."[55]

These narratives largely resumed where the second article had ended and involved stories of graphic violence against slaves. Like Lilburn Lewis, "Slavery No. III" included an account of a Virginian who brutally tortured an unnamed female slave. "Her body and her legs were literally cut to pieces," the account asserted, before adding that the slaveholder was acquitted for murder because the man's lawyer had argued that putting him on trial for the murder would be an "insult." Another anecdote spoke of the violence as "tortures" to underscore the brutality, observing that one slave had been whipped "until his back was one entire mass of blood and flesh cut up in pieces which were commingled and slowly amalgamating together." The slave driver then capped his abuse by unleashing a feral cat on the slave's back before setting him back to work.[56] Although they emphasized different dimensions of the slave system, the accounts of slavery in "Slavery No. II" and "Slavery No. III" endeavored to challenge the readers of the *Zion's Herald* to see and feel the humanity of the slaves. It was not sufficient to know what happened; readers needed to emotionally connect with the plight of slaves on a visceral level.

One account in "Slavery No. III," however, differed from the others. This anecdote told the story of a Vermont Baptist minister who encountered the peculiar institution while on a visit to the South. During one meal, the minister requested "a slice of that corn bread which the colored people had for their breakfasts." After dinner was concluded, the minister departed like "the Christian [who] fled from the American Sodom." While this account echoed other descriptions of poor working conditions, the Baptist minister's actions carried the significance of

[55] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2.
[56] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2.

the story a step further. On one hand, it afforded Scott an opportunity to promote a minister outside the Methodist Episcopal Church and highlight him as an example of the proper Christian response to slavery. This ecumenical spirit would characterize much of Scott's thinking, especially as it pertained to religious cooperation among reform-minded Protestants.[57] On the other hand, the story also subtly introduced readers to the idea of free produce. Free produce, an idea popularized first by Quaker women, sought to protect its practitioners from moral culpability over slavery by not partaking in the fruits of slave labor.[58] The Baptist minister's words in the narrative echoed free produce discourse, which was deeply rooted in conscience and a belief that to consume the products of slave labor was to assent to slavery itself. "My conscience will not permit me to partake of this food," the minister told his hosts, "while the people who work for it never taste a mouthful of necessary sustenance."[59] Inherent in this statement was also the intellectual seeds of what would become free labor ideology, most notably through an emphasis on the importance of a person being permitted to keep the fruits of their own labor. And in one brief sketch spanning two paragraphs, then, Scott introduced the ideas of free produce and free labor to his Methodist readers.

Like William Lloyd Garrison, Scott urged his readers to understand, appreciate, and accept the urgency of that crisis. "Is this a matter of small moment?" he asked the readers. "Suppose our sons and daughters were among that host who are covered with nothing but stripes

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[57] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2. Scott's envisioned alliance of reform-minded Christians will become an important theme in the chapters that follow. His complicated relationship with Catholicism will also be explored in relation to his general desire for evangelical unity. Although Scott was a critic of the Roman Catholic Church, his views were more nuanced than many of his compatriots because he saw it as a cautionary tale of a good institution turned bad as well as a bugaboo to compare to things he disliked. The latter dimension appeared in "Slavery No. III," with Scott proclaiming that slavery in America was "more than equal the horrors of a Roman inquisition!"
[58] Free produce was both systemic and personal. The former involved efforts to cultivate a parallel free labor economy and the latter required abolitionists to abstain from slave produce as individuals. Ultimately, most advocates of free produce abandoned their plans to replace the slave economy with a free one but nevertheless came to regard personal abstinence as an important individual duty.
[59] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2..

and blood?" He wanted his readers to think of the George or the Kate that they knew when they read the accounts in his articles. Scott, however, was keenly aware of the racial dimension at stake. "Suppose that this great army of sufferers were *whites*?" he pressed, adding, "Should we then content ourselves by merely saying that we are opposed to Slavery in the *abstract*?" Because all humans, white, Black, or otherwise, were children of God, "the case [of slaves being Black or white] is the same."[60] For Scott, race was irrelevant because it was always wrong to enslave human beings. Slavery, then, was not simply a matter of theory because it was a very real problem that harmed real people. In much the same way Scott had deprecated Thomas Whittemore's Universalism for its emphasis on the theoretical over the practical, he also challenged his fellow Methodists to view slavery through the prism of its human cost.

Scott's articles on slavery marked his first public foray into the volatile and delicate subject of slavery in the United States. But he did not confine his actions to the newspaper alone. On the same day that his third article on slavery went to press, he was in Boston to attend the third anniversary of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society and accept the position of vice president of the society, a rank in the organization he would share with abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Amos A. Phelps, David L. Child, and John Greenleaf Whittier.[61] Not only would those men become his allies in the antislavery movement, the meeting also symbolized Scott's explosive entrance on the antislavery scene by having his name inserted alongside some of the movement's most important influencers. Two of the society's vice presidents – Garrison and Phelps – were writers who had converted Scott to abolitionism and a third – David L. Child – was the spouse of another. But while men like Garrison and Child

[60] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2.

[61] "N.E. Anti-Slavery Society.," *New England Spectator*, February 4, 1835, vol. 1, no. 13, p. 51, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 7, 2022). "Third Annual Meeting," *Liberator*, January 31, 1835, vol. 5, no. 5, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 7, 2022).

approached slavery on a national scale, Scott's ambitions were far narrower. He initially sought to help the movement by nurturing it within his own church, first through the New England Conference and eventually the entire church. But the first step in that plan meant turning the *Zion's Herald* into a platform for antislavery discussion.

As the man who inaugurated that debate, he unleashed a rhetorical melee which brought combatants from various sides of the slavery, abolition, and colonization questions to the newspaper to discuss, debate, and disagree. Under Benjamin Kingsbury, Jr. and later William C. Brown, the *Zion's Herald* became a space for Methodists to share and express these substantial differences of opinion. This ultimately widened the burgeoning chasm between moderate Methodists on one hand and Orange Scott and the abolition Methodists on the other hand. The debate increasingly took on a character that extended beyond the personality of Scott, but by inaugurating this debate, he must be viewed as the debate's prime mover. In the weeks following Scott's first essays, Jotham Horton, a Methodist minister stationed in Lynn, Massachusetts, praised "the spirit of the articles from Rev. O. Scott" and announced his support for conversation about "the slave and his pretended master."[62] La Roy Sunderland, another Methodist minister, celebrated Kingsbury's conduct as editor because he hoped the discussion would help northern Methodists follow the example of their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic. "May the time soon come when our Conference shall imitate the Christian-like example of their elder brethren in England."[63] George Storrs, a minister in Concord, New Hampshire, penned his own contribution to the burgeoning discussion a few weeks later, replying to an article that had

[62] J. Horton, "Discussion of Slavery," *Zion's Herald*, January 28, 1835, vol.6, no. 4, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

[63] La Roy Sunderland, "Mr. Editor.," *Zion's Herald*, January 28, 1835, vol. 6, no. 4, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). In a separate article published by the *Zion's Herald* on the same day, Sunderland touted British antislavery activist George Thompson to the *Herald's* readership.

appeared in the more moderate *Christian Advocate and Journal*.[64] In each instance, Horton, Sunderland, and Storrs followed the path in the *Zion's Herald* paved by Orange Scott.

On January 28, 1835, the day when the *Herald* published Scott's "Slavery No. III," Daniel Whedon penned his first reply to Scott's articles. Whedon's essay was written and structured in a more academic manner than Scott's first three essays. The stark difference between their prose and essay-writing reinforced Whedon's academic pedigree when juxtaposed alongside Scott's more humble background. In line with this writing style, Whedon's essay had an introduction before he addressed three distinct topics in separate body paragraphs: colonization, emancipation, and expediency. With respect to the Colonization Society, Whedon contended that Scott's arguments were contradictory because Scott had invoked proslavery and abolitionist critiques of the organization at the same time. Scott, Whedon suggested, had adopted the abolitionist argument that colonization did nothing to abolish slavery while embracing the proslavery contention that colonization was the only means by which slavery could be abolished. In a display of Whedon's capabilities as a writer as well as his wit, he declared, "brother S. pours a double volley in opposite directions, upon front and rear – from the same battery." Whedon's reply, however, did not necessarily address Scott's very specific point that the Colonization Society had been "*held up* as the grand medium."[65] Where some proslavery advocates may have depicted colonization as a legitimate threat to their interests, Scott argued the opposite. In "Slavery No. I," the essay which Whedon principally replied to in his article, Scott objected to the society because it had been ineffective even as it promoted itself as the only means to abolish

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[64] G. Storrs, "Theophilus Arminius," *Zion's Herald*, February 4, 1835, vol. 6, no. 5, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). Edited by Nathan Bangs and Timothy Merritt, the *Christian Advocate and Journal* was the official organ for the Methodist Episcopal Church. The paper opposed discussion of abolitionism.
[65] D.D. Whedon, "Slavery.," *Zion's Herald*, February 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). Italics in Orange Scott's quote are my own.

slavery. Just because it touted itself as a vehicle to end slavery did not necessarily mean it was one. That was Scott's point, and one which Whedon overlooked.

The overarching thrust of Whedon's initial response to Scott, however, hinged upon the premise that they were not adversaries. He did not necessarily contest Scott's assertions about the shortcomings of the Colonization Society. Instead, he conceded that some in the movement struggled with "timidity" in the face of "the redoubled opposition of active enemies." Whedon further argued that Scott's views were not even in opposition to colonization. "He is … a friend to the plan of colonization – a *colonizationist*," proclaimed Whedon after a brief discussion of Scott's expressed sympathy for the organization's desire to promote Christianity in Africa. Moreover, Whedon contended that colonization, not abolition, was the movement founded upon "radical principles and purposes" and that abolitionist critics threatened to imperil the entire enterprise of emancipation with their "hostile views and feelings."[66]

Whedon further expressed a belief that he and Scott did not need to be rivals as he moved from his colonization section into a discussion of emancipation. "We all therefore profess emancipation," he declared, before adding that the difference of opinion between them was one of whether abolition would be "immediate" or "gradual." In this case, Whedon held that Scott could not even claim the mantle of "immediate emancipationist" based on his own definition of the term. Scott, he reasoned, should more accurately be considered "immediate amelioration with ultimate emancipation." This critique ably emphasized the fact that Scott, although he identified as an immediate abolitionist, had not expressly adopted Garrison's position of an immediate, uncompensated end of slavery. Whedon's argument would raise a consideration about the true

[66] Whedon, "Slavery.," 1. Whedon's effort to convince the reader that he and Scott were in agreement can be interpreted as either condescending or conciliatory. Regardless of Whedons' intentions, however, he tried to paper over disagreements and present a united front to the readership of the *Zion's Herald*. Given his explicit fears that a discussion of slavery would shatter unity of church and state, this appeal made practical sense.

nature of immediate abolitionism that Scott would continue to grapple with in the years that followed. But it afforded Whedon an effective counterargument in the short-term. "In the name of all the dictionaries at once," he declared, "do not call it immediate emancipation."[67]

The third and final section of Whedon's first reply addressed the question of expediency that remained a substantial and significant backdrop for the entire conversation in the *Herald*. This remaining portion of the essay is therefore worth examination because it offers insight into the contours of the debate, as well as the state of mind of men like Whedon when they wrote against Scott and the abolition Methodists. Expediency was the watchword. Whedon feared discussion of slavery not because he approved of the institution but because he feared calamitous consequences "not to the Union only, but the unhappy *slave himself*." Convincing Methodists in Massachusetts to support abolition, then, did not do a single thing to help end slavery. "Boston is not Savannah – Massachusetts is not Carolina," he asserted, adding that emancipation could occur only "by instilling conviction into the mind of the slave-master, or by political convulsion." And both of those possibilities would prove disastrous to the unity of the nation by putting the sections of the country into conflict over what they each would consider "perfect orthodoxy" and "damnable heresy." Regardless of the intentions of the immediate abolitionists, their "ill-directed benevolence" would only "knock the fetters more deeply into [the slave's] flesh [sic]." Colonization, according to Whedon, was the only means to avoid this destructive future, allowing Americans to become a "liberator" of the slaves rather than their "murderer."[68]

With "Slavery No. I" serving as an introduction and "Slavery No. II" and "Slavery No. III" providing the reader with examples of what Scott termed "the legitimate fruits of Slavery," his fourth article shifted to the slave trade. Given that the trade was far more unpopular than

[67] Whedon, "Slavery.," 1.
[68] Whedon, "Slavery.," 1.

slavery itself, this evolution made practical sense. It also echoed an important theme from John Wesley's writings against the slave trade and slavery: one could not exist without the other. Because slaveholders needed slaves to perpetuate the peculiar institution, they were "responsible for the wickedness and cruelties of that nefarious practice [the slave trade]."[69] This fourth essay, entitled "Slavery No. IV.," appeared in the *Zion's Herald* on February 11, 1835 alongside Whedon's first article. Although Scott designed "Slavery No. IV" with the slave trade in mind, his communication nevertheless placed equal emphasis on the peculiar institution itself. In doing this, he introduced two important components to the larger debate about slavery that would shape much of the discussion that followed: the concept of self-interest and the nature of morality.

Despite the fact that "Slavery No. IV" and Whedon's article appeared in the *Herald* on the same day, Scott seemingly anticipated Whedon's counterargument that slaveholders would never free their slaves because keeping them in bondage was in their self-interest. Scott, however, chose to emphasize a different element of self-interest. He argued that self-interest did not serve as a sufficient check on slaveholder cruelty. "This principle [self-interest]," Scott wrote, "affords the poor slave his only safety." But that principle was not sufficient to protect slaves from the predations of their masters. Theologically and philosophically, Scott's contention here served as an outgrowth of his earlier debate with Thomas Whittemore about human nature. During that debate, he had argued that humans possessed good and evil characteristics through a theology of limited depravity. This meant that he believed humans had a tendency towards wickedness, even if they were capable of goodness and benevolence. This perspective had challenged the theological optimism of a Whittemore and the rationalistic assumptions of secular philosophers that assumed humans always acted out of reason. As it related to slavery, he wrote

[69] Scott, "Slavery No. III.," 2.

that "the depravity of human nature" meant that "passion will sometimes triumph over self-interest." And even then, slaveholders could mistakenly conceive of their depravity as being a matter of self-interest. Reiterating the case of Lilburn Lewis, Scott noted that the "cutting up [of] a colored citizen with a broad axe, by the inches" could only be said to further Lewis' self-interest because it was done "in the presence of all his other slaves" and could therefore serve as a warning for misconduct.[70] As such, Scott argued that the existing status quo of trusting slaveholders to act in their self-interest could not be tolerated because it did nothing to check the abuses of the system.

The second component introduced what would become the moral cornerstone of Scott's abolitionism. For him, the discussion was not a debate in which each side endeavored to numerically prove whether there were more benevolent or cruel slaveholders. That discussion was irrelevant. The real debate, he argued, was over the morality of the peculiar institution. To challenge slavery, Scott promoted a form of moral absolutism that increasingly found itself at odds with a more flexible anti-abolition morality that viewed actions largely in terms of context or circumstances. Scott's absolute moral framework portrayed slavery as being either an absolute good or absolute evil with no room in between. Even if all the slaves in the United States were treated "kindly" by their masters, it would be insufficient to make the institution morally tenable. "Still Slavery would be a great evil," he wrote, "I hesitate not to say, *sin*." These moral absolutes were rooted in matters of principle and what he termed "the rights of man."[71]

[70] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," *Zion's Herald*, February 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[71] Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," 2.

But where Whedon argued in favor of discretion, Scott believed Methodists could only secure an end to slavery by presenting a stark moral contrast to Americans. To simply tolerate something that was evil by its very nature did nothing to undermine or abolish it. He argued:

> And is such a system to be looked upon by the statesman, the philanthropist, the Christian, or even the minister of the gospel, with *indifference*? Or, which amounts to the same thing, with *merely a sentimental opposition* to the system in the *abstract*? *GOD FORBID*! I am heartily sick of hearing about an opposition to Slavery in the *abstract*. But it may be asked, what can we do? That question shall be attended to at another time. I will however ask what has been done in the cause of temperance? – and by what means has public sentiment undergone such a change? – I will ask again, what have we tried to do on the subject of Slavery?[72]

As illustrated by "Slavery No. II" and "Slavery No. III," Scott attempted to dispel the impression among his readership that slavery was merely an arcane, theoretical question without real-world consequences. It harmed hundreds of thousands of human beings. The issue could not be relegated exclusively to the realm of sentiment; antislavery sentiment could only be considered genuine if linked with tangible action in the real world. Moreover, this effort could not be confined to a single social sphere. In making this point, Scott introduced what would become the cornerstone to his entire reform-minded worldview: what I have termed the Wheel of Reform.

The Wheel of Reform was a framework by which Scott filtered his ideas about the abolition of slavery. Those ideals became increasingly crystalized through his antislavery articles. Rather than viewing society with a rigid, top-down mindset, it echoed the expansive view of civil society promoted by thinkers like Edmund Burke. This school of thought, which highlighted the importance of institutions in society, served as its foundational premise. In essence, Scott viewed society as being composed broadly of three major institutional forces: the

[72] Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," 2.

church, the public, and the government. All three of these institutions played distinct but equally crucial roles in the promotion of reform, moral betterment, and societal progress.

The forces in society tasked with promoting the end of slavery, however, are worth notice: the statesman, the philanthropist, the Christian, and the minister. The statesman wielded political power that could abolish slavery. The philanthropist and Christian had the social influence to promote and diffuse antislavery sentiment among their fellow citizens and their elected leaders. The minister possessed the moral capital which could inspire others to act against slavery. One institution's responsibility flowed from the others, with the minister preaching an antislavery Gospel to the masses, the people embracing abolitionism and taking those views to the ballot box, and elected leaders implementing the policies of emancipation. Scott viewed temperance as a forerunner of sorts that could be seen as the template for abolitionists. Temperance had a social dimension of persuasion and a political dimension of legislative action, with Scott citing the former explicitly in "Slavery No. IV" before following with a discussion of the latter in subsequent essays. In the fourth article, Scott highlighted his faith that moral suasion could help promote reform because "If there were no venders and consumers, distilleries would soon be stopped." And the demand for something immoral could only be curtailed if people became convinced by others that it was wrong. On the other side, Scott's call for slavery to be abolished suggests a more comprehensive and compulsory program since he spoke of it being "universally abolished."[73] Only political action could secure such a lofty aspiration. This concept, however, will continue to be explored as Scott developed it.

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[73] Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," 2. O. Scott, "Slavery. No. V.," *Zion's Herald*, February 18, 1835, vol. 6, no. 7, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). As it relates the phrase "universal abolition," Scott's view at first appears confusing. In "Slavery No. V," he argued that "The universal abolition of Slavery would do more to destroy the slave trade, than all the laws that can *possibly be enacted*." However, the "laws" which he refers to here are the laws against the slave trade, not slavery. As a result, he only deprecates the laws against the slave trade

The final portion of "Slavery No. IV" served as an exposition on the slave trade. Scott would carry this same conversation into his following essay, "Slavery No. V." The discussion did not necessarily add a significant amount to his overarching argument other than to serve as a continuation of the cruelties of slavery outlined in his second and third articles. If those articles had discussed "Some of the branches of the tree of Slavery," then the remainder of the fourth essay would "examine the fruit, and by this means to come to a knowledge of the tree on which it grows."[74] Scott believed, like Wesley before him, that "Slavery has originated and still continues the slave trade" and that the two could not be separated. "Slavery No. V." further drew from the British experience by citing a British captain as well as invoking the names of William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson. For Wesley, Wilberforce, and Clarkson, the slave trade and slavery were simply two faces of the same moral evil. Wilberforce and Clarkson dedicated their lives to seeing both abolished in their country.[75] And despite a longstanding admiration for many British abolitionists, Scott always held a special affinity for Wesley. His insistence on a fundamentally Wesleyan understanding of slavery and the slave trade is crucial. In these debates over slavery within the Methodist Episcopal Church, Scott cultivated an image of himself as being a true disciple of the ideals of Wesley. By touting and promoting Wesley's antislavery record, Scott could successfully convince his readers that he, and not his opponents, carried forward the legacy of their denomination's founder. This rhetorical tendency would shape and continue to define Scott's legacy as both an abolitionist and a Methodist.

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because they strike at the symptom of the underlying problem: slavery. Moreover, he leaves ambiguous who will do the "universal abolition" of slavery, with the "general government" being a logical inference.

[74] Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," 2. Although not explicit, the words "fruit," "knowledge," and "tree" in the same sentence in relation to slavery suggests a subtle reference to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil from the Book of Genesis, the story which speaks of humanity's fall into depravity through the taint of original sin.

[75] Scott, "Slavery. No. IV.," 2. Scott, "Slavery. No. V.," 2.

Daniel Whedon's second contribution to the *Zion's Herald* discussion came on February 18, 1835, when the paper published his essay about foreign actors influencing American policy, whether it came from Roman Catholics or English abolitionists. In his article entitled "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE," Whedon deprecated all efforts by other countries to influence the United States on the "most delicate and most vital of all the POLITICAL *questions*…." Unlike the scenario where the United States sent advocates for temperance to England or the British sent members of the Missionary Society across the Atlantic, abolitionism was a different matter. Whedon's framing of antislavery activism stemmed from a fundamentally different understanding of slavery when contrasted with Scott. Where Scott saw slavery as an inherently moral issue with a political dimension, Whedon argued that slavery was a political matter. As such, he condemned any effort by foreigners, notably the British, to interfere in what he viewed as nothing more than a domestic political institution. And British abolitionist George Thompson was his primary target.[76]

Whedon did not select Thompson at random. He was visiting the United States in 1835 and using his influence to help promote the cause of immediate abolitionism. While Thompson's actions had won him early support of abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, his name had also recently arrived in the pages of the *Zion's Herald*. Abolition Methodist La Roy Sunderland penned an article at the end of January promoting "this distinguished Christian" and urging readers to "hear him for yourself, and then judge."[77] Where Sunderland viewed Thompson as the embodiment of Christian philanthropy, Whedon cast him as a dangerous foreign agitator. Likening Thompson's abolitionism to the hypothetical instance where an activist went to

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[76] D.D. Whedon, "Foreign Interference," *Zion's Herald*, February 18, 1835, vol. 6, no. 7, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[77] La Roy Sunderland, "George Thompson, Esq.," *Zion's Herald*, January 28, 1835, vol. 6, no. 4, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

England to pressure the British to change their policy toward Ireland, he asserted that being a "good Christian" did not permit anyone to "interfere in the private affairs of your family."[78] Again, Whedon's framing of slavery is illustrative. Where Scott depicted slavery as a moral sin, Whedon instead viewed the issue as a simple and private familial disagreement.

Whedon's argument also had an anticolonial dimension. Thompson could not speak on abolitionism because Britain was an oppressive and colonial regime. "Mr. Thompson," asserted Whedon, "has in all conscience, business enough at home. England is mighty only from the retinue of slaughtered and enslaved nations in her train." After calling Britain a "GIGANTIC SLAVER," he argued that the British had no moral authority to speak on slavery in the United States.[79] However, underlying Whedon's condemnation of Thompson and Britain rested a modicum of agreement with Scott's morality. Both agreed there were instances – temperance and missionary work – where reformers could work across national lines. They disagreed on what constituted acceptable reform. Whedon's article, for example, did not explain what made temperance a moral issue and slavery a political one, other than by his own determination. The disagreement over Thompson, then, revealed an underlying rift in how abolition and anti-abolition Methodists viewed the nature and parameters of moral reform.

Whedon, however, was not alone. A southern correspondent for the *Zion's Herald*, stationed in the South to report on missionary labors among the slave population, wrote to Benjamin Kingsbury to express his frustration with the antislavery discussion. Like Whedon, he worried that abolitionism would be counterproductive because "The planter … is exceeding jealous of Northern influence." By agreeing to confine its missionary work to the "purely *religious*" sphere, the Methodist Episcopal Church had gained access to slaves and an audience

[78] Whedon, "Foreign Interference," 1.
[79] Whedon, "Foreign Interference," 1.

with slaveholders. Like Whedon, the correspondent described slavery as a political matter rather than a religious one. If the church adopted positions on a domestic and political issue, he feared, "this opening door would be forever shut…."[80]

But the correspondent also took his argument further than Whedon in one important way. He argued that Methodists were bound to respect local laws in all circumstances, even if such laws were in direct contradiction with the moral good. Placing this deference within the context of slave insurrections, he noted:

> As a people, we profess the strictest loyalty. Obedience to 'the powers that be,' however corrupt – to the laws of the land in which we live, however unjust – has ever been taught and practiced by us, ... and however unjust and oppressive the legislative enactments of these states are, respecting Slavery, our brethren feel bound to obey them, and also make the best of them….[81]

This assertion not only sought to justify slaveholding; it also was a call for northern Methodists to cease their agitation on the issue of slavery. In doing so, the correspondent promoted a perspective on civil society diametrically at odds with the one championed by Orange Scott. Where Scott viewed the church and state as partners, allies, and equals in the work of reform, the correspondent made an explicit argument to the contrary. To him, the church needed to yield and submit before the state, even when its laws contradicted the laws of God.[82]

Although most of Scott's "Slavery No. V." relayed an account from Benjamin Morrell, Jr. about the Middle Passage, his essay offers insight into the direction he desired to take his discussion about slavery, abolition, and colonization. Scott adopted a largely Garrisonian outlook

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[80] "From Our Southern Correspondent.," *Zion's Herald*, February 18, 1835, vol. 6, no. 7, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[81] "From Our Southern Correspondent.," 2.
[82] "From Our Southern Correspondent.," 2. This correspondent made this point unambiguous when speaking about colonization, which he feared was even too "excitable" for "the great majority of slaveholders." Whedon cited the correspondent in his second reply to Scott as evidence that abolitionist agitation would create a backlash. See D.D. Whedon, "Slavery No. II.," *Zion's Herald*, March 4, 1835, vol. 6, no. 9, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

on the culpability of the United States with respect to the slave trade because the national government had permitted the trade to exist for two decades. "What are we better than a nation of thieves and pirates?" he asked his readers, declaring that "Our national character is deeply stained in blood." He did not, however, frame the issue in political or even secular terms. His argument adopted a religious character. "*When* and *how* have we repented of the wrongs we have done to Africa?" he pressed, musing aloud whether they could expect "the curse of God" for being "responsible for the sin of that trade."[83] By using the language of religion, then, these assertions invoked a deeply theological understanding of slavery.

While many of Scott's views about the sinfulness of slavery were hardly unique, his ability to promote them to the New England Conference remains historically significant. He integrated the radicalism of a Garrison into the more conservative context of American Methodism and had a talent for reconciling the tensions inherent in such a combination. And in much the way Scott placed Jefferson and Wesley side-by-side, he invoked the same standard by asserting, "Can it be possible that, who has created of one blood all nations of men … will always look upon our conduct with indifference?" This quote, which combined the Jeffersonian fear of God's impending wrath over slavery and Acts 17:26's invocation of "one blood," further illustrates Scott's symbolic commitment to unify the ideas of the American republic with his Christian worldview. His framework for reform and society sought to harmonize the shortcomings of the former by connecting them to the latter. Scott believed that civil authority could not exist in a secular vacuum; religion was integral towards promoting and cultivating a better country and a better world.[84]

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[83] Scott, "Slavery. No. V.," 2.

[84] Scott, "Slavery. No. V.," 2. Acts 17: 26 (KJV), reads, "and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."

Although Scott remained concerned with the real-world implications of slavery and criticized those who deemed it a matter of theory, that did not mean he rejected abstract discussion. To Scott, ideas of an intellectual, religious, or political nature always appeared in tangible and real ways. Slavery was no different. The idea of slavery came from somewhere. And Scott, like many of his abolitionist allies, identified the true battle as being one over the "principle" that people could hold other human beings as property. All the cruelties he outlined in "Slavery No. II," "Slavery No. III," "Slavery No. IV," and "Slavery No. V" were the direct and inevitable consequence of the right to property in man. Once that principle had been established, he lamented that "the foundation is laid deep and broad for the infliction of every imaginable cruelty." The only way to truly defeat slavery, then, would be to destroy the ideas that gave it life. "Against this principle," he concluded, "every philanthropist and every Christian should contend with boldness and perseverance."[85] These claims suggested a broad platform upon which philanthropists and Christians could stand together against a common adversary. And Scott believed they could only prevail over that corrupt principle if they promoted an aggressive, uncompromising moral vision rather than a milquetoast one.

The following Wednesday, on February 25, 1835, the *Zion's Herald* published "Slavery No. VI" as well as Scott's reply to Whedon's first article. In his sixth entry, he continued to depict slavery as it existed but turned to the domestic slave trade to show that slavery was sinful in all its forms and circumstances. "The *internal slave trade* is scarcely less horrible and cruel than the foreign traffic," he wrote, indicating a parallel between the foreign version that everyone condemned with the more divisive domestic one. To help paint this picture, and prove this point to his readers, Scott quoted at length George Bourne's P*icture of Slavery*. Of the two excerpts

[85] Scott, "Slavery. No. V.," 2.

from Bourne that he used, Scott selected an account of Methodist culpability in slavery as well as an account of a slaveholding preacher. His intentions were clear because both challenged readers to consider what slavery did to "the honor of Christianity, and the Christian ministry."[86]

In introducing this subject to his readers, Scott further crystalized many of the ideals that became the foundation of his antislavery worldview. At the heart of this "unjust usurpation of the rights of man in this country" was a fundamentally "*moral question*" that he feared the public had "lost sight of."[87] The morality of the issue stemmed from the fact that slavery deprived human beings of their dignity as God's creation and their natural rights as children of God. These circumstances in the present, however, did not occur in a vacuum. Human dignity and human rights were chiseled away over time. Scott wrote:

> Neither the statesman, philanthropist, philosopher or Christian could have endured, to have seen a company of desperadoes reduce at once more than *two millions* of immortal souls, from the rank of human beings, to that of mere animals, and articles of merchandize!! But how in the name of Christian morality is the evil palliated by being of long continuance? Has bondage become more tolerable because it has been long endured? Have the poor slaves lost all claim to their natural rights because they have been so long deprived of them?[88]

Although this argument largely served to address criticisms that slavery existed and therefore should continue, underneath that foundation rested very significant elements of Scott's worldview. He invoked the differing, interconnected forces that composed society. He presented a stark moral contrast between slavery and abolition by the way he framed the designs of slavery. Not only was it cruel; it was antithetical to a Christian worldview and American republicanism. If all humans possessed natural rights, if they were created of one blood in the image of God,

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[86] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. VI.," *Zion's Herald*, February 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). In this essay, Scott argued that the circumstances of the domestic and foreign slave trades were identical.
[87] Scott, "Slavery. No. VI.," 2.
[88] Scott, "Slavery. No. VI.," 2.

then slavery could never be justified on a theological or philosophical basis. This statement offers a clear contrast between his view of slaves as human beings with natural rights and immortal souls and the opposing view that cast them as “mere animals” and “articles of merchandize.” Once again, Scott sought to use severe language to strike at the principles which gave life to slavery. And in this instance, he targeted the purported right to property in man.

The remaining contribution of “Slavery No. VI” was Scott’s juxtaposition of American hypocrisy and British virtue. For example, he expressed indignation that the domestic slave trade could exist in Washington D.C.: “near the very Temple of American Freedom!” This built on his earlier criticisms of America and his excoriations that the nation had fallen short of its ideals. But in his sixth essay, Scott briefly championed Great Britain as a laudable alternative and did so in a manner which offered a point of contrast with Whedon’s condemnation of Britain as an oppressive empire. The British, Scott wrote, had conducted themselves with “honor” by treating the slave trade, domestic or foreign, as a crime punishable by death. In contrast, Scott decried the “Men-stealers” of the slave states in America and the way they “briskly” carried on their internal slave trade.[89] Scott’s use of the inflammatory phrase “men-stealers,” a biblical phrase from St. Paul that John Wesley had helped promote and popularize, reinforced this point.

Finally, Scott subtly introduced another key element to his Wheel of Reform, namely the role of the community and the public in the process. As will be explored in the coming pages, the Wheel of Reform stressed that the American Church, understood by Scott broadly as all the different churches in the United States, acted as a prime mover on great moral questions. Intrepid ministers championed the cause of reform and spoke from their pulpits with a stark moral clarity that could shake an apathetic, misguided, or wicked public into action. These individuals took

[89] Scott, “Slavery. No. VI.,” 2.

private and collective action to address the problem and applied political pressure on politicians to implement legislative policies that could finally secure reform. However, in 1835, Scott identified two roadblocks to this approach: the churches, as the prime mover, had not yet become sufficiently abolitionized and, because of that, the public was lost in ignorance.

Writing in the *Zion's Herald* over the course of his first six essays, Scott addressed both issues by casting slavery as an absolute moral evil and by providing the information that could inform the public. With respect to the latter, Scott acted from the premise that Methodists were as ignorant about slavery as he once had been. His dual mission was to challenge slavery by striking at its moral roots and placing a mirror in front of its ugliest abuses. "This Christian community slumbers sweetly!" decried Scott when referring to the slave states. His actions sought to awaken the consciences of his brethren in the free states and rattle those in the South.[90] In this sense, Scott could be seen as bringing his revivalist approach to abolitionism. Just as he called on people to repent with great urgency, he likewise utilized a similar appeal on the issue of slavery. Given Scott's belief that slavery was a sin, this message made sense. It should be seen as an extension of his earlier calls in the ministry for repentance and renewal. He sought a moral awakening brought by discomfort with sin that could then inspire people with the religious zeal to embrace their role as actors in the work of reform.

This point became apparent in Scott's first reply to Whedon. Although Scott spent several paragraphs defending his introductory essay and remarks on colonization, the central thrust of his rebuttal focused on the role of the church in society. This became a crucial fixture of the subsequent debate over slavery. The issue, which Whedon had framed as a question of

[90] Scott, "Slavery. No. VI.," 2.

"expediency" was instead viewed by Scott as a fear of "*imaginary* consequences."[91] Although he conceded that "*public opinion is powerful*," he did not believe it was absolute. Popularity did not inherently confer moral virtue upon something. Public opinion could and needed to change when it was an error. And Scott believed slavery was an issue where it needed to change to be in accordance with "The spirit of the nineteenth century." This would require all aspects of society working together and fulfilling their unique roles. "Let the presses, pulpits, legislatures, conferences, associations, synods, &c.," he wrote, "speak *one language* and with ONE VOICE, and see what the effect will be…."[92] Reform, in Scott's understanding, was not a top-down or bottom-up process, but a combination of the two because it could occur only when the institutions of society acted in concert.

Scott's first reply to Whedon therefore served as a turning point in the slavery discussion. Most notably, it established the way in which Scott came to regard abolitionism as an outgrowth of Christianity. His first essay, which Whedon had lambasted several weeks earlier, was simply "an introduction to what was to follow" and "a kind of text, on which I had calculated to preach several sermons." Scott's expressed plans to base sermons on his antislavery essays illustrates that he viewed the topic as a religious matter. Where Whedon and the southern correspondent for the *Herald* had depicted the peculiar institution as a domestic political issue, Scott planned to discuss it from the pulpit. Moreover, Scott justified his immediate emancipation *bona fides*, which Whedon had challenged, in equally religious terms. "Suppose I should preach to a sinner that he ought to repent immediately," he hypothesized, adding, "from that moment he should set

[91] O. Scott, "Reply to Prof. Whedon.," *Zion's Herald*, February 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). Scott's use of "imaginary consequences" was not an assertion that the consequences would not happen. Instead, he simply argued that no person could predict the future and that they therefore could not change their conduct over fears of what *might* come to pass.
[92] Scott, "Reply to Prof. Whedon.," 2.

about the work, - ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well." For Scott, abolition was not the singular act in which shackles were removed from enslaved Americans. It was a comprehensive and gradual series of events, which entailed the sinner "forsak[ing] his wicked thoughts and wicked ways" and "mak[ing] restoration where he had taken unjustly."[93] Abolition, then, was the process of emancipation and the rectification of the evils which had made such an emancipation necessary in the first place. It meant striking at the principles that sustained slavery: racial prejudice, the will to power, and the right to property in man. It meant enabling African Americans to take their place as equal citizens. And by likening the process of abolition with the sinner moving from sin to redemption through repentance, Scott crystallized that this work was synonymous with the promotion of the evangelical Christianity that had shaped his first decade and a half in the ministry.

Moreover, where Whedon warned of the possible consequences that could occur because of antislavery agitation, Scott countered by asking what "system of theology, ethics, or logic" led him to that conclusion. Scott was unfazed by Whedon's consequences precisely because he saw discussion of slavery as a religious obligation rather than a choice. It was essential to do the right thing regardless of what happened. After quoting Isaiah's call to "let the oppressed go free," he argued that the statement was an absolute command. To Scott, Isaiah did not qualify it with an "if the 'consequences' will allow it" exemption. Whedon's assertion about consequences not only created a "*new rule* of duty," it amounted to a rejection of scriptural obligations. "I differ from Br. Whedon in the position he has taken," Scott concluded, adding, "I am of the opinion that we should ascertain our duty from the *Bible*, and from the laws of *equity* and *justice*."[94]

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[93] Scott, "Reply to Prof. Whedon.," 2.
[94] Scott, "Reply to Prof. Whedon.," 2.

By the end of February 1835, Orange Scott had taken an important step toward becoming a leader of the abolition Methodists. He had done so through organizational action that made an open debate between abolitionists, anti-abolitionists, and colonizationists a possibility. By doing that, Scott had further crystallized the differences between Methodists over the peculiar institution. His brand of immediate abolitionism was of a Garrisonian stamp but also tempered by the influence of Wesley and his Methodist faith. This led Scott to develop a unique vision for abolition Methodism that would shape the movement in the years that followed. However, if the movement were to endure, it would need to grow. In the months that followed, Scott continued to make his case before the public. How Scott continued this debate with anti-abolition and colonization Methodists and how he helped transform his anuual conference into a hotbed for abolition Methodism is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Orange Scott vs. Middletown Methodism, Part II

Orange Scott's first months in the public eye as a professed abolitionist helped facilitate a rapid transformation of the New England Conference. This chapter continues to explore Scott's plan to promote abolition Methodism within the conference with a focus on the worldview he articulated in the *Zion's Herald*. The struggle over the direction of New England Methodism culminated at that year's annual conference at Lynn, Massachusetts, in a debate between abolition and colonization. Ultimately, Scott's ability to organize Methodists and animate them with his abolition Methodist worldview proved decisive. By June 1835, six months after he wrote his first abolitionist article, the New England Conference became the antislavery center of the entire Methodist Episcopal Church.

This did not mean the abolition coup went unchallenged. Daniel Whedon's second reply to Scott appeared in the pages of the *Zion's Herald* on March 4, 1835. From the onset, Whedon took aim at the very foundation for Scott's Slavery Nos. 2 through 6 and their reliance on anecdotes. "There is certainly no denying that he has a brilliant talent for that figure of speech called quotation," Whedon sneered, deprecating Scott's "second-hand bolts" and sympathizing with "the original owners" that Scott had purportedly plagiarized. Like Thomas Whittemore before him, Whedon viewed Scott as intellectually beneath him: nothing more than "a young swimmer who adventurously abandons the cork that buoyed him." While this condescension could be attributed to class distinctions, the attitude stemmed in part from the differing ways they viewed slavery. As we have seen, Whedon saw slavery as a political issue while Scott approached it as a moral evil. This meant that he found Scott's entire argument appalling by its very design. "Does he gravely think that our beloved country is no better than a nation of blood-

stained, unrepentant, heaven-accursed *thieves* and *pirates*?" he mused in reference to Scott's earlier excoriation of America.[1]

For Whedon, Scott's criticisms of the United States were the product of "some foreign calumniator" and he suspected "Br. Scott's cheek would be flushed with patriotic indignation" were such a phrase uttered about the country on any other issue besides slavery. In making this claim, however, Whedon aptly – though inadvertently - captured a key point of difference between them. Whedon saw slavery as an issue just like any other, one that could be ameliorated or redressed over time. For Scott, however, slavery's very presence in America posed an existential threat to its spiritual health. As such, Scott, as Whedon predicted, *would not* muster a "triumphant refutation" of the foreign critic on that issue because he *could not* do so.[2]

Although Whedon's criticisms of Scott regarding the moral dimension to slavery reflected a widening gulf between their worldviews, the professor's argument against Scott's vision of reform proved equally revealing. "Br. Scott's extracts, as well as his original remarks," Whedon observed, "are founded upon the idea that the public sensibilities are dormant, and need stimulating into excitement." This statement accurately summarized Scott's plan with respect to the Wheel of Reform. Scott believed that the public had a latent antislavery sentimentality which ministers could tap into through preaching and evangelization. The entire reason Scott had engaged in quotations and anecdotes had been to promote greater knowledge and understanding of the peculiar institution. To successfully tap into those dormant antislavery attitudes, Scott needed to first make his readers aware of slavery as it existed in practice while also challenging them to reject the foundational principles that had created it. Whedon himself could muster no

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[1] D.D. Whedon, "Slavery No. II.," *Zion's Herald*, March 4, 1835, vol. 6, no. 9, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[2] Whedon, "Slavery No. II.," 1.

defense of those accounts, which he conceded were "truly heart appalling." However, he found the exposition of them "as unnecessary as [the details] are horrible" because free states had no jurisdiction over slavery. Moreover, Whedon differed with Scott about the state of antislavery sentiment in the North. "If he [Scott] imagines that New England has hitherto on this subject been callous, because she has not been clamorous," he wrote, "he does most wo[e]fully wrong the land that gave him birth."[3] The difference between them was clear. Where Whedon saw what northerners had already done against slavery, Scott emphasized what they had failed to do.

Whedon concluded his essay with a few paragraphs on colonization. He found Scott's contempt for the Colonization Society bewildering because the organization had opposed the slave trade, promoted economic growth in Africa, protected African tribes, and elevated African Americans by returning them to their ancestral home. Instead of attacking the "abominations of the African slave trade" or secure "the total extirpation of this detested merchandize in human blood," Whedon lamented that Scott had become one of the "bitter assailants" of colonization. This point was so crucial to Whedon that he repeated it. "Why do we find him [Scott] associated with the assailants of the plan which is so nobly applying its energies to the extirpation of its horrors?" he asked in his conclusion. If Whedon ever found himself opposed to the Colonization Society, he confessed, "I should from my very soul believe myself an opponent of the advancement of human happiness, an obstacle to the march of human liberty, and a foe to the good of the human race."[4]

This revealed another central area of disagreement between professor and presiding elder. The dispute, however, stemmed from their agreement on many of the overarching problems surrounding slavery. Neither man bothered to justify the terrible results of the slave trade or the

[3] Whedon, "Slavery No. II.," 1. "Woefully" is misspelled in the original text.
[4] Whedon, "Slavery No. II.," 1.

Middle Passage. Whedon's remarks even suggest he shared, at least in part, Scott's hostility to the peculiar institution. In his own way, Whedon believed colonization was the moral, philanthropic program because it did the greatest good whilst avoiding even greater evils. For Whedon, preventing even greater calamity was the "all important point."[5] While Whedon felt that those with antislavery sensibilities needed to navigate a fragile political, social, and religious climate, Scott instead contended that the environment did not change the moral character of the issue at hand. If something was evil, Scott felt it should be condemned regardless of the consequences. As such, both men believed they were the ones promoting the betterment of society but differed in what that entailed. Whedon believed he was securing the *greater good* while Scott comparatively felt himself acting in service of the *moral good*.

Orange Scott's "Slavery No. VII" appeared in the *Zion's Herald* alongside Whedon's second reply. Although still grounded in painting a picture for readers, this essay shifted the focus towards the "business" of slavery. Underlying his lengthy discussions of slave auctions and the economic angle rested a larger critique of slavery's foundational principles, specifically the right to property in man. Like many abolitionists, Scott did not reject a right to property; he condemned slavery because "it is impossible for him in the nature of things to hold property [in a human being]."[6] This was ultimately a religious consideration that he juxtaposed with the economic-centric approach of the slave system.

Slaves, he wrote, were "immortal beings" who had been relegated to the status of "human cattle." Yet the peculiar institution had consigned their inestimable spiritual worth to mere

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[5] Whedon, "Slavery No. II.," 1. In a footnote in which Whedon touted the *Zion's Herald* southern correspondent, he speaks of "the probable effect of violent northern procedure or opinion upon the South" as the "all important point" in any potential discussion of slavery and abolition.

[6] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. VII.," *Zion's Herald*, March 4, 1835, vol. 6, no. 9, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

economic utility. “To see the price of human beings estimated in dollars and cents … is *almost past human endurance*,” he wrote at the onset of his seventh essay. Lydia Maria Child, one of the four individuals who had helped facilitate Scott’s own conversion, emerged as one of his sources. Scott used her accounts to illustrate the casual way that southern papers connected human beings with ordinary articles of property. This system, which separated families and treated humans like property, was made all the worse because it existed in the United States, a nation which Scott described as “the most enlightened nation under heaven.” “The star-spangled banner proudly and hypocritically waves over the bondage and oppression of millions of our fellow citizens,” he wrote, adding that the “colors of American freedom” also flew in “another direction” as “the flag of the human flesh auctioneer.”[7]

Scott, however, filtered these accounts and these arguments through a religious lens and a Methodist worldview. “Who can question the doctrine of *human depravity*?” he asked his readers, condemning America’s claim to the mantle of “land of *liberty* and *religion*.” Slaveholding, he instead argued, did “violence to the laws of God and the rights of man.” However, this raised an important consideration that shaped Scott’s antislavery sensibilities and would define how his belief system reflected the relationship between human and divine law. Slavery, in Scott’s view, was not simply a legal matter left to the discretion of human legislatures and local communities. It was a sin. This became a crucial underpinning to Scott’s critique of slavery and American hypocrisy. Governments, in his view, existed to realize and institutionalize divine law in human society. Human laws could never supersede the laws of God because the latter was supreme.[8] In this respect, Scott reconciled his liberal belief in inalienable natural rights

[7] Scott, “Slavery. No. VII.,” 2.
[8] The idea of a “higher law” than those of human governments did not originate with Scott. Philosophers and theologians had presented similar arguments. For example, Edmund Burke’s argument against Warren Hastings in Great Britain had rested upon a belief that there existed a law of nature and nations that trumped British law.

with his religious conviction that all law should conform to God's law. He could not separate the Lockean conception of natural rights from a religious framework because God was the author of those rights and he "created all men free and equal."[9]

Moreover, Scott linked the American republic with the Kingdom of Israel and saw connections between the two: favored by God yet liable to lose their way.[10] "Can any human statute disannul the laws of the Supreme Jehovah?" he asked, "And can precedents in cruelty and oppression destroy the natural and inalienable rights of rational and accountable beings?" Classical Liberalism and Christianity, then, existed in perfect harmony because to fight against slavery was to fight the sins surrounding it. Slavery, he argued, was "a legalized system of robbery, theft, fornication, and even murder."[11] This further explains Scott's references to the breaking up of families; it illustrated one more way that slavery challenged the moral framework of divine law by an assault on the institution of marriage.

Scott's abolitionism, premised in part upon the "one blood" argument, rejected the race-obsessed thinking of antebellum America. This would continue to define his abolitionism in the years that followed. He did not believe race had anything to do with a person's inherent dignity or worth because they were created by the same God and endowed with the same rights. This explains why Scott went to such lengths to avoid conceding the premise that slaves were slaves. But the terms he used were egalitarian, whether in a political sense like "citizens" or in a religious sense like "immortal spirits." In other cases, he simply used the phrase "human beings." While he would invoke the phrase "colored," he did so to stress that race did not actually matter because it did not define a person's character or worth. This is because the phrase "colored"

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[9] Scott, "Slavery. No. VII.," 2.
[10] Scott likened American silence on slavery to David's lamentation in 2 Samuel 1:17-27, which had urged silence on King Saul's death out of fear the Philistines would learn and rejoice.
[11] Scott, "Slavery. No. VII.," 2.

would appear only in front of the words that conferred or implied a fundamental equality with whites: words like "citizens" or "brethren." In that sense, they were citizens or brethren who happened to be people of color, and that color did not mean they had forfeited the natural rights that God gave them. "Have they not natural and inalienable rights as well as others?" he asked, noting that "*caste*" was a "pagan notion" which too many "*Christian Americans*" had adopted. He then pressed readers to consider how they would feel if slaves were white instead of Black. These questions challenged the racist tendencies of potential readers, yet Scott did not stop there. He pushed his audience to view their discomfort with enslaved whites as evidence that slavery was immoral under all circumstances. What existed in someone's heart mattered far more than the color of their skin. Slave kidnappers, for example, were people with "white skins and black hearts." Moreover, the entire race-centric approach to chattel slavery defied logic, with Scott noting that a slaver could sell a person on the basis that "there be a drop of black blood in his veins" even if that person was "actually whiter."[12] Linking this racial determinism with the right to property in people, Scott condemned the way race had created a "line of demarcation between human beings, and articles of merchandise."[13] Since Blacks and whites were human beings, their inherent worth as children of God pointed to an equality between them.

Scott's discussion of race did not end there. He then introduced an even more controversial issue: miscegenation. In his seventh essay, he first referenced this forthcoming change in direction by alluding to "the most degrading prostitution" among the host of sins spawned by slavery and again a few sentences later when he suggested that a slaveholder could

[12] Scott, "Slavery. No. VII.," 2.
[13] Scott, "Slavery No. VIII.," *Zion's Herald*, March 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 10, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

sell "his own son." In his concluding postscript, Scott confirmed his intentions to explore the concept of "an amalgamation of the whites and blacks."[14]

That subject appeared in the *Zion's Herald* on March 11 as "Slavery No. VIII." Scott linked this discussion of interracial relations with his religious and moralistic belief system that cast slavery as a font of sin and source of other depravities. "*Slavery is a legalized system of licentiousness*," he wrote, noting that it fostered a variety of other sins against men and women. However, the specter of sexual assault served as a backdrop. Fears of race-mixing because of emancipation, Scott observed, were "a Northern objection" that stemmed from ignorance of what happened on plantations. "By visiting the plantations … you will find as many shades of color among the slaves," he wrote, not-so-subtly insinuating at the reason why "pure and unmixed" Blacks had become "comparatively scarce." This system, he wrote, had relegated "a million of our American females" to a state of "perpetual prostitution, contrary to their will."[15]

He blamed the Methodist Episcopal Church for helping create this situation. By tolerating slavery, it had failed the "thirty to forty thousand female" church members who, despite the strength of "their moral principles," lived in fear that they would be "violated by every white scoundrel." He directly challenged slaveholders themselves and observed that "The resemblance of many of the mulatoes to their owners and drivers is too striking not to be noticed."[16] The miscegenation on southern plantations, specifically between female slaves and their white masters, was a gravely sensitive subject for slavery's defenders. Yet Scott turned and directed his rhetorical fire against even that unspoken element of the peculiar institution.

[14] Scott, "Slavery. No. VII.," 2.
[15] Scott, "Slavery No. VIII.," 2.
[16] Scott, "Slavery No. VIII.," 2.

Scott, however, did not confine his argument to sexual assault. He also discussed a perceived casual approach to sex among slaves, which he blamed on a culture that was "directly encouraged" by slaveholders. This was fundamentally a religious problem for Scott since rape and casual sex were two fruits of a society which had diminished the sanctity and significance of marriage. Misplaced fears over miscegenation missed the larger problem. "Of the two evils," he asked readers, "would not one legitimate mulatto be preferable to [one] hundred illegitimate ones?" It is important to note that while Scott used the phrase "evil" in the context of miscegenation, his emphasis rested on the evil of sexual immorality. This is exemplified by his opposition to sexual license with respect to unmarried relations between slave men and women. While Scott cannot be said to be a promoter or celebrant of interracial marriage, he nevertheless tolerated it. Marriage, in Scott's understanding, was a sacred covenant between a man and a woman that was forged by love and mutual consent. He simply assumed that the removal of the compulsory force inherent in slavery would mean fewer marriages between whites and Blacks.[17]

"Slavery No. IX," published on March 25, continued to develop this argument with concrete examples derived largely from Bourne's *Picture of Slavery*. This article further depicted slavery as an inculcator of sin and refined Scott's gendered views of the peculiar institution. The sexual dimension to slavery produced a host of other sins: devastation of the institution of marriage, jealousy, rape, incest, and a litany of other acts Scott considered to be sinful. Moreover, he promoted the idea that slavery created an "ungodly and impure phraseology" that devalued women by turning female slaves into "Breeding wenches" and encouraging "sloth and voluptuousness" in white women. As he neared the end of his article, he indicated to readers that he felt women were part of the problem and part of the solution. Slavery created the

[17] Scott, "Slavery No. VIII.," 2.

circumstances that made "female slave-drivers" comfortable and tempted them to overlook "the grossest sensuality in their husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers." His article, however, also emphasized that women were necessary players in emancipation. "We must look to the northern ladies," the article concluded, noting that "They must cast off their mischievous prudery … and covering themselves with Christian mail … they must take up the arms which they can wield with more success than the men…."[18] Although Scott's complicated views on women's rights will be explored in more detail later, he consistently advocated for their presence in reform movements as complimentary laborers.

Scott accompanied his eighth essay from the March 11 with a brief response to Whedon's "Slavery No. II." After assuring readers "I am not even so much as wounded" from "a second broadside from Middletown," he then reciprocated Whedon's biting snark with some of his own. "It [Whedon's essay] does not seem to be at all deficient in pomposity," he replied, asking readers, "but where are the arguments?" He continued: "The Professor, has, however, one excellence, and one which I presume no person in this case will covet; it is *originality*." A phrase Whedon had used – "Elegant Extracts" – annoyed Scott and he promised his proof would appear in the next article as a series of "elegant extracts." Scott specifically objected to the phrase because he felt it was nothing more than a condescending way of "disposing of facts by wholesale." This complaint allowed Scott to claim the moral high ground by helping build a narrative that he acted entirely "in self defence." By emphasizing Whedon's "Elegant Extracts" phrase, Scott could rebuke the sarcasm behind the phrase and argue that he was the debater who sought an earnest argument "conducted with coolness and candor" rather than "sarcasm and personal invectives." As was the case during his argument with Thomas Whittemore, Scott

[18] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. IX.," *Zion's Herald*, March 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 12, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

remained largely focused on the ideas at stake rather than personality. "I hope the contest will not be one of persons, but principles," he wrote, contrasting his conduct with the way that "brother Whedon attacks *me*, rather than my communications…"[19]

The most significant component to this reply rested on Scott's comments about latent antislavery sentiment. "I admit it," he said of his belief that "public sensibilities are dormant" before charging that Whedon's rebuttal was itself "*proof* of the *sickly state* of public sentiment on the subject of Slavery." This assertion is significant because it illustrates that Scott's belief in public sentiment was not naïve or overly sanguine. The apathetic public had the capacity to become abolitionists but needed a moral guidance that could "disturb the consciences of southerners" and awaken "the sweet slumbers of the North."[20] In this sense, Scott held the same views of human nature that he had espoused during his debate over Universalism. Where Whittemore had suggested humans were inherently good and therefore predisposed to do good, Scott believed humans were inherently flawed but possessed a latent goodness that made them *capable* of doing good. A "sickly" state suggested a physician needed to tend to it. And that physician was the minister, the philanthropist, and the Christian. That is why he saw antislavery feeling as dormant. It was not simply ignorance that caused this state; public opinion could be apathetic or even complicit in evil. For Scott, promoting reform was not strictly about appealing to the people's better nature; it was about making people realize the evil in their midst and helping them choose to reject what they had once accepted or tolerated.

On the same day the *Herald* published Scott's eighth article and his reply to Whedon, Wilbur Fisk entered the newspaper's discussion over slavery with a lengthy letter to Benjamin

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[19] O. Scott, "Reply to Prof. Whedon's No. II.," *Zion's Herald*, March 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 10, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[20] Scott, "Reply to Prof. Whedon's No. II.," 2.

Kingsbury complaining that one of his temperance speeches had been modified to become an abolitionist work. Fisk alleged that Scott was behind the act and had "garbled and altered" his speech "so as to make it speak the language of modern abolitionism."[21] This letter, however, illustrated the burgeoning hierarchical coalition against Scott's brand of abolitionism. The Wesleyan University principal echoed and crystalized many of the sentiments of his professorial colleague. The Whedon-Fisk objection to abolition Methodism rested on opposition to Scott's moralization of slavery and a belief that colonization was the only practicable means to ameliorate and ultimately abolish slavery.

Scott's tendency to promote stark moral absolutes in his discussions of slavery served as a source of frustration for both Fisk and Whedon. Where Whedon had implied these things, Fisk made them explicit. His frustrations over a repurposed temperance speech illustrated that. In Fisk's view, temperance and what he termed "modern abolitionism" could not be used interchangeably. "I object to this use of a 'Temperance address' of any kind," he wrote, "because it is an attempt to fraternize two causes that are … entirely distinct." Scott, by contrast, had depicted abolitionism as a logical extension of temperance work because both were moral issues. Fisk, however, found the logic of this position "*highly questionable*."[22]

More significantly, Fisk suggested that Scott had neglected his religious duties by using his position as presiding elder to promote antislavery literature. Scott's agitation on slavery would, he feared, lead ministers to "neglect their regular work, to drive round their circuits and districts, preaching abolition and distributing 'pictures of slavery.'" He further deprecated what he viewed as an effort to "convert our religious periodicals into anti-slavery periodicals."[23] In

[21] W. Fisk, "Unauthorized Transformation.," *Zion's Herald*, March 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 10, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[22] Fisk, "Unauthorized Transformation.," 1.
[23] Fisk, "Unauthorized Transformation," 1.

both cases, Fisk established a clear demarcation between abolitionism and Christianity. By differentiating abolitionism from the "regular work" of preachers and church papers, however, Fisk argued that the former did not even belong beside the latter.

The second element of the Whedon-Fisk school of anti-abolitionism rested on its indignation that Scott had claimed the mantle of true antislavery advocate. By creating a world of stark moral absolutes, Scott had necessarily created a world of moral juxtaposition in which one either stood for immediate abolition or endorsed the slave system. Fisk took issue with this framing since he regarded slavery as an infinitely more complex problem. "I will have no partnership in the sentiment," he wrote of Scott's suggestion that opponents of "the present abolition movement, are 'apologists' for slavery." Fisk shared Whedon's view that the New England states had already abolished slavery and opposed the peculiar institution. This led him to condemn Scott's invectives of denominational culpability as defamation of their church. "I believe the M.E. Church has done the best she could on this interesting and difficult subject," he declared. Like Whedon, Fisk viewed the relationship between church and state in the 1830s as increasingly fragile and sought to navigate the delicate issue of slavery without creating more problems.[24] This dilemma is connected to Fisk's understanding of colonization. His recurring contrast of "modern" abolitionism is therefore worthy of notice. He viewed immediate abolitionism as inherently radical and destructive while he saw colonization as a more conservative and therefore a more acceptable form of antislavery activity. His juxtaposition of what he termed "practical benevolence" and "theoretical benevolence" illustrates this.

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[24] Wilbur Fisk took aim at Scott for using his position as a presiding elder to promote abolitionism by distributing accounts like the ones cited in "Slavery No. II- Slavery No. VIII" as well as purchasing over one hundred copies of the *Liberator* for distribution among the ministers. As Fisk observed, "No good can possibly arise from this course." He concluded the letter with a foreboding tone: "I fear for the peace of the Church, for the tranquility of the nation, and for the vital interests of the slave himself."

Abolitionists, he argued, had alienated the public and made matters worse. "*Fever* is not *health*," he reasoned, adding that colonization had done far more practical good and "indirectly liberated more slaves, probably, than all the anti-slavery societies…."[25] In much the same way that Scott had deprecated the Universalists as abstract theorists, Fisk countered by using the same argument against him.

Two weeks later, on March 25, the *Herald* published Scott's reply. This article was composed of three crucial components. Scott sought to vindicate radical, "modern" abolitionism, criticize the colonization society as ineffective, and condemn the Fisk-Whedon approach to emancipation. Each of these, however, must be understood as building towards an integral pillar of Scott's worldview. He not only defended himself and his antislavery views; he inverted the narrative of "modern" abolitionism and turned Fisk's entire argument on its head. In this sense, Scott cast himself as the real conservative and Fisk as the dogmatic, radical ideologue.

The two abolitionists that Scott chose to defend were the two that Fisk had attacked by name or inference: George Bourne and William Lloyd Garrison. Scott defended his choice to promote Bourne's *Picture of Slavery* and Garrison's *Liberator* because both allowed ministers and the Methodist laity to "inform themselves" with "the needed information." In Scott's framing, Bourne's work was "a faithful delineation of some of the principal features of the slave-holding system" and Garrison's *Liberator* did not exemplify the "exciting and unreasonable" spirit that Fisk ascribed to it. His defense of Garrison and the *Liberator*, however, went even further. He justified his decision to send copies of the *Liberator* to Methodist ministers because it would help them make up their own minds about abolition and colonization. If Fisk objected to Garrison, Scott sarcastically suggested he could distribute copies of John Wesley's *Thoughts*

[25] Fisk, "Unauthorized Transformation.," 1.

Upon Slavery as an "antidote" to Garrison. But, in Scott's view, Fisk would never accept that alternative because he would be just as "opposed to Mr. Wesley" as he was to Garrison.[26] This argument illustrates a very crucial point. By drawing a direct line from Wesley to Garrison, Scott portrayed William Lloyd Garrison as a modern heir to the antislavery ideals of John Wesley.

This underscores the type of conservatism that Scott had formulated. Where Fisk had condemned the "modern" abolitionism of a Garrison and touted his own primitive abolitionism, Scott argued that "modern" abolitionism *was* primitive abolitionism. Scott made this argument because he understood radicalism and conservatism very differently than Fisk. He did not see radicalism and conservatism as two inherently opposing forces that championed the respective remaking or preservation of civil society and its institutions. Scottite conservatism should be understood as a desire to aggressively conserve the values of the past. This form of radical conservatism, however, was not wedded to specific institutions themselves so much as it was committed to the preservation of the principles that they represented. It defended institutions in a broader sense – the church, the state, the civil society – rather than the specific organizations that composed church, state, or society.

Scott first promoted this understanding of conservatism in his reply to Fisk but would continue to refine it during the 1830s and 1840s. It rested upon the premise that the key to present problems lay in finding where pure principles had been articulated or exercised in the past. In this sense, Scott cannot be classified as a true radical because he did not see his antislavery activities as being innovative. Instead, he justified his uncompromising agitation with historical precedent and framed his conduct as advancing the legacy of John Wesley and early American Methodism. This explains how Scott could declare that Wesley and Garrison were

[26] O. Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk.," *Zion's Herald*, March 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 12, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 25, 2022).

largely identical, because Garrison's "modern" abolitionism in the 1830s said nothing that was fundamentally different from Wesley's primitive abolitionism in the 1770s.

This form of conservatism emphasized a reverence for the past. It adopted a radical posture, although it was one designed to promote a conservative end because it championed historical heroes and clamored for a return to the ideals and values from the past. In response to Fisk's calls for a more moderate tone that would avoid creating turmoil, Scott rebutted:

> Was there no excitement connected with the declaration and maintenance of American independence? ... Was there any excitement connected with the bold adventures of Luther, when he took hold of the horns of the beast, and exposed his deformities to public gaze? ... Was there no excitement connected with the glorious career of the immortal Wesleys, when mobs and persecutions were raised through the kingdom? ... Was the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament brought about without excitement?[27]

Scott fashioned "modern" abolitionism as a direct successor and continuation of the American Revolution, the Protestant Reformation, the founding of Methodism, and British abolitionism. Scott emphasized principles – those amorphous values that together created a worldview – and believed that the principles that drove those events were the same ones that animated him in the 1830s. This enabled Scott to claim that he stood on the shoulders of Jefferson, Luther, Wesley, and Wilberforce because he championed their principles. Whether or not those timeless principles created excitement was therefore irrelevant because he believed they were right.

Scott further fleshed this idea out in May 1835 when he reproduced a copy of the Methodist Episcopal Church Discipline from 1801, which expressly condemned slavery and advocated punishment for its supporters.[28] "We … are more than ever convinced of the great evil of African slavery," the Discipline began before offering a litany of comprehensive "regulations"

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[27] Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk.," *Zion's Herald*, 1.
[28] The Methodist Church Discipline was a document that established what the church believed on religious doctrine, ecclesiastical protocols, and social issues.

designed to secure its end, “immediately, or gradually.” This enabled Scott to further promote a dichotomy between an idyllic past with a corrupted present by showing readers where the Methodist Episcopal Church had once stood on the issue of slavery. In the corrupted present, Scott argued that slaveholders could stay in the church without so much as “being spoken to.” His conservatism, then, rested on a belief that the solution did require creating something *new*; it required a return to the *old*. He sought a policy of what Edmund Burke would consider reform rather than innovation. His opposition to the calls to “keep still,” therefore originated from his desire for a return to the old order and the principles upon which it had been built. In the case of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that meant returning to the church’s original regulations on slavery. “Blessed be the memory of a [Thomas] Coke and [Francis] Asbury,” he proclaimed, “who disturbed their consciences on the subject of Slavery, so that they did not forget it for thirty years.”[29] Scott’s solution rested entirely on the final clause of that phrase. The job of the reformer – and therefore the duty of the abolitionist – was to *remind* Methodists, and Americans by proxy, of who they really were and what they once believed.

This conservatism allowed Scott to claim the mantle of pragmatist and cast the Whedon-Fisk view as being dogmatic and impractical. In Scott’s view, colonization had failed to fix the problem of slavery and actually made it worse. “We have been standing still this fifty years,” he told Fisk, asserting that “There are probably three times as many [slaves] now in the country as there were fifty years since.” Colonization, he observed, would end slavery only when slaveholders themselves consented to it, a statement which suggests that he did not believe moral suasion alone was enough. Their approach was not practicable since Scott speculated that it

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[29] O. Scott, “For Zion’s Herald,” *Zion’s Herald*, May 27, 1835, vol. 6, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were early bishops in American Methodism and played a pivotal role in building the fledgling denomination. Both were also critical of slavery.

would be tens of thousands of years before the Colonization Society could abolish slavery. Worse, colonization was "*prospective in its application*" and therefore premised on future actions and events which may not even come to pass. It tolerated evil in the present in the name of doing good at a later, undetermined point in time. This led Scott to suspect colonizationists like Fisk were far more loyal to the movement than to their purported principles. "Dr. F. I suppose, is willing the slaves should remain in bondage till the colonization society frees them," he asserted. In Scott's characterization, the colonizationists were the real ideologues so wedded to a movement that they rejected practical evidence around them. Abolitionism, beyond being the more principled solution, was also the more practical one because it focused on the "*now*."[30]

Whedon's third article appeared in the *Zion's Herald* on March 25. He emphasized two major critiques of Scott: that Scott's opinions were inconsistent and that he held reckless views on potential consequences. With the respect to the former point, Whedon offered some substantive criticisms but veered into personality when discussing Scott's "contradictory character" in the discussion. Rather than grapple with Scott's arguments, Whedon dismissed them with the handwaving phrase "puzzling explanations." The one exception to this general rule was Scott's explanation from March 11 on immediate abolitionism. Whedon argued that what he saw as Scott's gradual evolutions on slavery were proof that he could not be trusted. Scott, he observed, was sympathetic to colonization in 1833, indifferent to it in 1834, and critical of it in 1835. Given such a rapid change, Whedon argued Scott was as likely to "go the whole extreme of hostility" as he was to "veer quite around again."[31] This argument was premised almost entirely upon the assumption that Scott's antislavery shift was insincere.

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[30] Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk.," 1.
[31] D.D. Whedon, "Slavery. No. III. Rejoinder to Rev. O. Scott's 'Reply.,'" *Zion's Herald*, March 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 12, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

Whedon's critique carried even greater weight when it turned toward Scott's hedging on policy specifics. Scott had viewed immediate abolition as part of a gradual process of emancipation coupled with elevation, yet he had offered little specificity to the questions of *when* and *how*. This was certainly a compelling rebuttal. Since Scott was making an affirmative case for immediate abolition, the burden of presenting a practicable plan rested with him. If the act of emancipation took five years, Whedon asked readers if "we ruthless gradualists" would not "grow impatient to break the chains a little sooner."[32] Yet when it came to the larger issue, however, Whedon overlooked the fact that Scott was far more interested in direction rather than specifics. Scott saw himself as promoting a reform movement and religious worldview, not a policy platform. As such, the specifics were less important to him than convincing people to embrace antislavery principles and accept that slavery was a grave sin. This cannot be separated from its religious underpinning. Specific policy prescriptions were a secondary matter that was open to discussion among people of shared principles.

The second dimension to Whedon's rebuttal rested upon his fear of consequences over antislavery agitation. He chose to reaffirm his belief that consequences should influence a person's moral decision-making and went so far as to suggest that if Scott believed consequences were irrelevant then he should "present a pistol to his own breast, and pull the trigger" or "apply a lighted match to a ship's powder magazine." For Whedon, then, consequences were the only thing which could temper human behavior. When it came to slavery, he challenged Scott to speak directly with slaveholders if he was unconcerned with consequences. Whedon then presented an alternative perspective and cast himself as holding "a healthful regard to consequences" in contrast with "brother Scott's doctrine of disregard to consequences" because

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[32] Whedon, "Slavery. No. III. Rejoinder to Rev. O. Scott's 'Reply.,'" 2.

he believed “There is no express command which imperatively binds us, without calculating consequences, to preach immediateism to the southern slave-holder.”[33] Whedon justified this view by noting that they had no obligation to promote emancipation in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, or the South. Abolitionist agitation, he argued, offered no benefits, and could only led to ruin. He mused:

> Standing in contemplation of the momentous facts before us, upon this question as upon most others, exercising, with a sense of our responsibility to our God … we ask ourselves what course is likely to produce least consequent calamity to this nation? … Neither the command of God nor the good of man, neither heaven nor earth, would justify a closing of our eyes to the tendencies of our own actions and a reckless blindness to whatever evils may follow from our career. Realizing that it is from American Slavery that the most enlightened patriots have feared, and the most anti-republican assailants have hoped, for American ruin, we tremble lest any rough handling of this matter, any disastrous misstep should plunge us in an abyss of disunion and of anarchy, irremediless and irrevocable – a catastrophe the more to be deprecated, since *ruin to ourselves would probably be still deeper ruin to the slave*.[34]

This assertion, especially the imagery of a person closing their eyes, encapsulates the difference between Whedon and Scott. Where Whedon believed one had a duty to weigh political consequences, Scott believed ministers had the obligation to pursue moral good above all else.

Concluding with a metaphor of a prison, Whedon argued that Scott, by way of immediatism, had “laid a powder mine beneath a prison.” The metaphor involved a futile effort to dissuade Scott from his plans to liberate the prisoners and ended with Scott blowing up the prison in a botched effort to rescue the captives inside. This caricature of Scott allowed Whedon the opportunity to succinctly summarize his overarching views of abolition: “I detest Slavery … but I would not save a *part* by ruining the whole.”[35]

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[33] Whedon, “Slavery. No. III. Rejoinder to Rev. O. Scott’s ‘Reply.,’” 2.
[34] Whedon, “Slavery. No. III. Rejoinder to Rev. O. Scott’s ‘Reply.,’” 2.
[35] Whedon, “Slavery. No. III. Rejoinder to Rev. O. Scott’s ‘Reply.,’” 2.

After penning this article, Whedon wrote a brief postscript to Benjamin Kingsbury. Where Scott had viewed Whedon's criticisms as *ad hominin* attacks that turned the debate from principle into personality, Whedon dismissed Scott's complaints as overreactions to "good humored badinage" that may have been "tinged" with a little sarcasm. Whedon thought his tone was defensible because he had done so "*without at all weakening the* argument." Although he offered an olive branch and "retracted" any comments which "appeared like personal bitterness," this offer came with a caveat. Taking note of Scott's emphasis of the phrase "Elegant Extracts," Whedon proposed a compromise: "he must confess that I think they are 'Extracts;' and I … will confess that they are any thing but 'Elegant.'"[36] He further justified his stance by pointing to Scott's own use of provocative language that had depicted colonizationists as proslavery. Whedon's argument relied in part on presenting Scott as hypocritical and even unstable, and he wielded a biting but eloquent pen to present that image to readers.

Although the debate between Scott and his opponents had taken a turn towards the polemical, Kingsbury offered insight into the opinions of some observers. Initial reactions that he posted in the *Herald* were largely favorable. C.R. Harding of Northfield, New Hampshire, although an abolitionist, praised the discussion because "Truth can lose nothing by investigation" and announced he had acquired six subscribers for the *Herald* because of it.[37] Jared Perkins, an abolitionist from Dover, New Hampshire, believed Kingsbury's willingness to open the paper was "highly commendable."[38] Another subscriber from New Hampshire, W.H. Hatch, singled Orange Scott out for praise. "I am much pleased with the heroic step which Br. Scott has taken, by entering the field of discussion," he wrote, adding that "I hope he will so succeed in

[36] Whedon, "Slavery. No. III. Rejoinder to Rev. O. Scott's 'Reply.,'" 2.
[37] C.R. Harding, quoted in "Extracts of Letters.," *Zion's Herald*, February 11, 1835, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022).
[38] Jared Perkins, quoted in "Extracts of Letters.," 3.

enlightening the North, that we may with him … unite our influence in driving the monster Slavery from our common country."[39] By the end of March, Kingsbury made more reviews public. For his part, he felt "sincere satisfaction" as the months progressed.[40] The many reviews from subscribers that graced the pages of the *Zion's Herald* offer an interesting perspective on the debate. One subscriber from Newbury, Vermont, for example, offered his "commendation" to the Wesleyan Association for opening the newspaper to discussion and asked God to "sustain them in their laudable enterprize."[41]

Another Vermonter, Otis F. Curtis, announced that he had acquired "a few more subscribers" for the *Zion's Herald* because of its "free discussion of Slavery" and he urged fellow readers that the paper "MUST be supported" so long as they "oppose error, oppression, and wickedness." A reader from East Salisbury, Massachusetts complained that the *Herald* had been too slow to discuss of slavery, but nevertheless praised them. "Better late than never," he wrote. Phineas Crandall, an abolitionist from Newburyport, Massachusetts, also praised the discussion and endorsed the *Herald's* willingness to give "both sides" an equal voice. He even offered his own review of the discussion and the debaters: "The work is in good hands."[42]

Jotham Horton wrote to Kingsbury to express his own views. Horton, although initially skeptical of the antislavery movement, had increasingly been convinced to support it and, during Scott's debate in the *Zion's Herald*, became even more outspoken on the subject. Writing in May 1835 as a reflection on the debate's "objectionable character" in its earliest months, Horton

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[39] W.H. Hatch, quoted in "Extracts of Letters.," 3.
[40] "The Discussion.," *Zion's Herald*, May 6, 1835, vol. 6, no. 18, p. 3 ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[41] "Extracts from Letters," 3.
[42] "Extracts from Letters," 3. Given that Crandall said that he had no intention to "participate in the discussion," his belief that "The work is in good hands" refers to Benjamin Kingsbury as editor, Orange Scott as abolitionist, and Daniel Whedon as colonizationist.

argued that the tension was largely inevitable. Rather than being the fault of its participants, these problems stemmed from what he called "the *nature of the question itself*."[43] Slavery, then, was the real culprit. In recapping the debate, however, Horton accurately summarized the kind of abolition Methodism that was being diffused among the New England Conference from 1833 to 1835. Discussion helped fight "great national evils" by making them "known," which he identified as a key step in reform. Horton concurred with Scott that slavery was fundamentally a moral question and he therefore concluded that there was nobody "better qualified to discuss it than Christians, ..." This meant that abolition Methodists did not act against slavery "*politically*"; they opposed "the principles upon which it is founded, and its moral character in the sight of God, ..." Like Scott, Horton stressed the primacy of principle: "No great philanthropic movement was executed, except based on eternal principles. These must first be discussed and established in the minds of men, before there will be sympathy and action."[44] Horton, who would become one of Scott's greatest allies, accurately summarized the purpose and progress of the Wheel of Reform. Only through open, candid discussion and ministerial agitation could moral reform occur in society and produce the political will necessary to rectify great moral evils.

On the other hand, Bryan Morse, a correspondent from Lowell, worried that the influence of "personalities" had convinced people that abolitionists and colonizationists were adversaries rather than allies. Nevertheless, Morse still admitted "I do not object to the discussion."[45] By contrast, William R. Stone, a Methodist from Warren, Rhode Island, offered a dissenting voice.

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[43] J. Horton, "The Discussion.," *Zion's Herald*, May 6, 1835, vol. 6, no. 18, p. 3 ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[44] Horton, "The Discussion.," 3.
[45] Bryan Morse, "On Intemperate, or Misguided Zeal," *Zion's Herald*, April 8, 1835, vol. 6, no. 14, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

Acknowledging that "some" correspondents endorsed the discussion of "the abolition question," he said there were "others who are not so" enthusiastic. His reasoning, however, did not necessarily stem from colonization or anti-abolitionism. "There are papers enough devoted to this discussion," he wrote, adding that, like Whedon, he feared "our favorite paper" had been "made to contain" material which he believed was "displeasing" to some of its readers.[46] Stone's perspective underscores the way that even the discussion about the discussion could connect to abolitionism. Colonizationists feared that the very idea of a discussion threatened to destroy unity in church and state. One agent for the paper, for example, wrote Kingsbury to inform him of a subscriber who wished to cancel the paper. "He don't like the slave discussion," the agent wrote.[47] These accounts reveal the different perspectives over slavery by the spring of 1835, but these reviews in the *Zion's Herald* also illustrate an inclination towards abolitionism within the New England and New Hampshire Conferences.[48]

Kingsbury, then, publicly cultivated an image of overwhelming support for discussion. Privately, however, he was concerned for the future of the *Herald*. These fears, however, did not necessarily stem from concern over subscriptions. Writing to Orange Scott in March 1835, Kingsbury boasted that colonization subscribers could easily be replaced by abolitionists. What troubled him was potential intervention from church authorities. In particular, he had heard rumors that Bishop Elijah Hedding supported having the New England Conference withdraw its patronage of the *Herald*. Even if Hedding failed, however, Kingsbury was worried because some

[46] "Extracts from Letters," 3.
[47] "A Peep into the Editor's Closet," *Zion's Herald*, May 6, 1835, vol. 6, no. 18, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[48] Although Benjamin Kingsbury was supportive of Scott, he offered space in his columns to colonizationists as well as abolitionists. His decision to promote letters favorable to abolition might reflect his biases, but his willingness to provide a forum of free discussion suggests that this sample of letters can be taken as reflective of the paper's general readership.

of the paper's agents had threatened to quit over the matter. These threats frightened Kingsbury in a way that frustrated subscribers did not. He nevertheless remained unintimidated by the looming challenges facing the paper. "Go on, brother," he told Scott, advising him to take the high ground in his debate with Whedon and "meet insult like an abolitionist, in the spirit of love…. You have the best side, argument is only necessary."[49]

On April 1, Wilbur Fisk reentered the debate between Scott and Whedon by interjecting William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* back into the discussion. Garrison, who had taken issue with Whedon's article about George Thompson's "foreign interference," cast the professor as "a slave-holder, or the son of a slave-holder." The decision to cite the *Liberator* article was a deliberate and calculated choice by Fisk. It furnished him with a justification to reenter the debate so that he could support a colleague who had faced "gratuitous slander." More significantly, Garrison's tirade against Whedon afforded Fisk the opportunity to excoriate abolitionism more broadly. The invectives which Garrison cast upon Whedon, Fisk concluded, "show the readers of the *Herald* to what a pitch of acrimony and gall the modern spirit of abolitionism is propelling its votaries." He believed Garrisonianism was the logical end of abolitionism and that it transformed well-intentioned radicalism into fanaticism. Fisk acknowledged that these individuals may pursue "some truly benevolent object," but claimed that their radicalism had "anathematized" everyone who disagreed with them, even when their differences were confined to "the mode of its accomplishment."[50]

Fisk's arguments echoed the conservatism of his earlier writings. He carried these arguments from the theoretical domain into the practical realm by using Garrison as a foil.

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[49] Benjamin Kingsbury, quoted in Matlack, *Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 77-78.
[50] W. Fisk, "For Zion's Herald.," *Zion's Herald*, April 1, 1835, vol. 6, no. 13, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

Depicting Garrison as an avatar allowed Fisk to then portray abolition Methodists as Garrisonian agents inside the church. Given his connections to Garrison, Orange Scott was an obvious, although unnamed target. Fisk wrote:

> It is a fact that among our own brethren, among our own ministers, we have men who are countenancing and patronizing this same Wm. Lloyd Garrison. Would you have thought it? – one of our ministers, a man rather noted for his candor and kindness, has already drank so deep of this spirit, that he is circulating gratuitously, as I am informed, and at his own expense, one hundred copies weekly, of this same Liberator …. This strikes me as practically endorsing the paragraph; as giving it the influence of his individual sanction and recommendation.[51]

While Scott was the unnamed man, Fisk's commentary also applied to his supporters. Abolition Methodists, Fisk reasoned, had allied themselves with a radical movement that he believed was fundamentally at odds with Methodism. "Several" ministers, he announced, were guilty of opposing the interests and authority of "their own Church."[52]

Fisk then connected Garrison with George Thompson to reinforce Whedon's complaint that abolitionists were an unpatriotic product of foreign agitation. He connected this point with the cornerstone of his anti-abolitionism: concern over consequences. Fisk, like Whedon, painted a dire portrait of what abolitionism would inflict upon America and the world. "Do not these men see that ruin to the master and slave, ruin to the nation, will be the consequence?" he asked, invoking the word that had become so central to the debate with Scott. The only winners from the discussion of slavery would be "the Holy Alliance" and "the autocrats and despots of the eastern hemisphere." It would only be a matter of time before "we shall have an abolition party in politics, and an abolition *party* in the Church." Fisk's choice of "party" is crucial because it once again underscores his belief that abolitionism was an inherently political endeavor. It was a

[51] Fisk, "For Zion's Herald.," 1.
[52] Fisk, "For Zion's Herald.," 1.

faction. These agitators were not moral reformers, they were "political partizans" who acted with the goal to "*get votes and office*."[53]

Fisk's subsequent defense of the Constitution, which rested entirely on its political provisions, further illustrates his insistence that church and state were separate entities. Even when addressing the moral dimension of abolitionism, Fisk remained careful to avoid ceding the premise. He urged Methodists to resist "the philanthropic *appearance* of the cause." His use of italics is revealing because it demonstrated his belief that abolitionism was not philanthropic; it *appeared* philanthropic and tricked people into believing political agitation was a moral crusade. "The enemy always chooses a good soil, in which to *sow his tares*," Fisk wrote, referencing the parable of the tares. Although this comparison implied a religious dimension in the debate, Fisk's metaphor remained inherently political by the way he framed it.[54]

The dispute over the moral or political nature of the antislavery enterprise revealed fundamental differences between Methodists. It exposed disagreement over the relationship between church and state as well as the role of religion and evangelical faith in a secular, republican society. By portraying slavery as a political matter and a domestic institution, Whedon and Fisk had constructed the argument that ministers had no business in society outside of purely religious considerations. Moreover, the very discussion of a political issue in a religious paper was dangerous enough in their minds to not only destroy the church but tear the

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[53] Fisk, "For Zion's Herald.," 1.

[54] Fisk, "For Zion's Herald.," 1. Although a references to the parable of the tares from the Gospel of Matthew, Fisk's metaphor remains largely political. The entire quote from Fisk reads, "The enemy always chooses a good soil, in which to sow his tares; and he always sows them among wheat, and he does it while men sleep." Since Fisk did not offer an explicit explanation of the metaphor's components in the way Jesus had done, this leaves it open to speculation. By preceding the parable with a warning of imminent "catastrophe" and singling out the effects on the American government, it suggests Fisk was making a political point. Nevertheless, by virtue of using a parable in which "the enemy" or Satan sought to corrupt the "good soil," Fisk firmly placed abolitionism and its adherents on the side of the Devil.

nation itself apart. For these reasons, they believed the churches and their ministers should cease discussion or agitation on any subject tinged with politics. This assumption, however, accepted the premise that church and state were fundamentally separate entities that should not intersect.

Orange Scott's Wheel of Reform served as the alternative, one which gave the church and state different but interconnected roles in the promotion of social reform. The Whedon-Fisk effort to confine politics and religion to separate, disconnected spheres, made his framework untenable. For Scott, law and politics did not strip moral questions of their inherent morality. That meant that the church and ministers played an important role in the discussion of political issues that had a moral dimension. As he wrote in "Slavery No. X," statutes and law had become a barrier that made it easier for slaveholders and slave traders to "pacify their consciences." Moreover, law was, by its very nature, rooted in questions of morality and religion. By constructing a world in which slaves faced unequal justice before the law, the government had undoubtedly weighed in on a religious matter. These laws not only suggested that "a black's man's crimes are worse than those of white men," they went further by suggesting that "his life and soul are less valuable." The latter point was, in Scott's view, an obvious religious issue. Even the "political economy of Slavery" and its emphasis on the literary ignorance of its victims could only be compared with "a Spanish Inquisition."[55] The parallel between plantation and inquisition is significant. By connecting slavery and Catholicism, it underscored the intersecting characteristics of politics and religion in Scott's worldview.

The Wheel of Reform could only function in a free society that inculcated and preserved a robust culture of free speech. Because moral reform flowed from pulpits to people to politicians, discussion remained a crucial mechanism in that process. Scott emphasized that point

[55] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. X.," *Zion's Herald*, April 8, 1835, vol. 6, no. 14, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

in "Slavery No. X," taking aim at the Whedon-Fisk fears that discussion would produce calamity. "They fear for the church, and they fear for the state, i.e. the UNION," he wrote, while still conceding that he shared their view that abolitionists ought to "use the *most prudent measures*." For Scott, however, being prudent did not mean being pusillanimous. The only way to create "so great a change" was through discussion, even if it produced "some excitement and agitation, both in church and state." This point is essential to understanding Scott's abolitionism. Freedom of speech was an essential element to ending slavery. He went so far as to ask readers if "Slavery will ever be abolished without a free discussion?" This cannot be separated from the Whedon-Fisk "consequence" argument. The consequences they always spoke of were hypothetical ones, such as the looming specter of civil war. In every case, Whedon and Fisk warned of consequences that had yet to materialize. But for Scott this was proof that they tolerated "an indefinite continuance of Slavery" in the present because of "imaginary consequences" that may or may not occur in the future. He then asked his readers again, "ought we to give up the contest, and rest upon our oars and suffer millions of our fellow citizens to continue in bondage another century?" His answer left little room for ambiguity: "NO."[56]

In further expanding upon the Wheel of Reform and the way free discussion enabled reform to flow from church to society to politics. He wrote:

> We expect to bring public opinion to bear *directly* and *unitedly* upon the subject of Slavery – we expect to make Slavery as unpopular as intemperance, and the traffic in human souls as degrading as the traffic in alcohol. Slavery will live as long as it is supported by public sentiment; and it will die when it is frowned down by an indignant public, and not before.[57]

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[56] Scott, "Slavery. No. X.," 2.
[57] Scott, "Slavery. No. X.," 2.

This represents one of Scott's clearest statements on how the process of reform would play out in practice by emphasizing its middle stage. No single organization in America could end slavery because it required the institutions of church and state as well as the people to act in concert. Scott would further develop and refine this argument in the ensuing years by emphasizing the role churches played as prime mover and highlighting the role government played as final actor. The people remained the requisite means to bridge the gap between church and state, and that rested on a public opinion that could only be changed through discussion and moral suasion.

Scott concluded his tenth essay with a brief notice to Whedon. He left a terse review of Whedon's response from March 25, writing, "it is of such a character that I must confess myself utterly incapable of making any answer to it." His primary complaint was Whedon's justification of his sardonic tone. Referencing Nehemiah 6:3-4, Scott argued that the importance and solemnity of their work meant that he did not have "time for *criticisms*, *witticisms*, *playfulisms* or *sarcasms*." He then issued an ultimatum: "Br. W." would need to present "ARGUMENTS against the doctrines of the abolitionists" with "some degree of CANDOR" or he would "probably take no notice of any thing he may write."[58] His solution to Whedon's sophistry, then, was simple: he would ignore it.

After dispensing with Whedon, Scott turned his attention back to Fisk. He penned an essay served as a direct rebuttal to Fisk's letter from April 1, in which Fisk had excoriated the *Liberator* and described the calamitous consequences of antislavery agitation. For his part, Scott prefaced his letter with praise of Fisk before targeting his ideas. His rebuttal again stressed religion. "If these measures are of men, they may be overthrown," he conceded before stipulating that "if they are of God, they will stand." For his part, Scott believed abolitionism came from the

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[58] Scott, "Slavery. No. X.," 2.

latter. "The principles I advocate are the principles of *justice*, *reason*, and *religion*," he declared, adding that he only desired to promote causes which "are founded in justice and religion."[59]

Scott, however, placed special emphasis on Fisk's consequence-based objections. Once again, he framed himself as the conservative and the Whedon-Fisk interpretation as being a radical innovation. "I think if this new method of ascertaining the nature of *effects* before the causes which produced them *exist*," he wrote, then it would require the complete overturning of the philosophy and science of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. Scott, however, believed that this adherence to speculative theory rather than experience led Fisk and Whedon to base their logic on a faulty cause-and-effect paradigm. This stemmed from the relationship between "first principles" and "facts." By being so wedded to theoretical consequences, Scott concluded that they had ignored the facts which should guide one's application of principles in the real world.[60]

Scott adopted a twofold critique of their perspective. First, consequences should not solely influence one's decision making. Fisk and Whedon's "colonization philosophy," by urging inaction on slavery out of fear of dire consequences, had placed that fear ahead of "revelation, religion, justice, and humanity." This belief system created a world of inconsistent morality, in which the moral worthiness of an act hinged upon changing variables rather than objective truth. Although he stopped short of saying so, Scott believed and would later argue that the morally right action should be undertaken even if the worst consequences came to pass. Second, Scott argued that the morally correct option could also be the expedient one. In contrast with Fisk's prognosis of "the dreadful desolations of abolitionism," Scott offered his own "prophesy" and presented a strikingly different picture. In part, he observed:

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[59] O. Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk. No. II.," *Zion's Herald*, April 22, 1835, vol. 6, no. 16, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[60] Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk. No. II.," 1.

> I will then venture to predict, that the doctrines of the abolitionists will become popular in all the non-slaveholding states … that clergymen, statesmen, and the public presses, will soon speak out with a united warning voice on the subject of slavery … that slavery will soon be abolished in the District of Columbia and the Territories …. slavery will be generally considered no better than theft, robbery, or piracy, for such it is in fact; and then it will be given up. There will be no destruction of the church … There will be no division of the Union….[61]

Although Scott's idyllic vision of a bloodless emancipation did not come to pass, his prophecy still offers insight into the process by which he envisioned slavery's demise. It was a religious and moral undertaking which entered the social realm and eventually made its way into politics. It served as the intersection of "in *word* and *tongue*" with "in *deed* and in truth" because it did not confine itself to mere "*abstract*" considerations.[62] A public opinion shaped and cultivated by the churches, then, was a necessary ingredient for the political action that would secure a final emancipation.

Days later, Scott wrote a companion article entitled "Consequences" that was published on May 6. This article expanded upon this central facet to the Scott-Whedon-Fisk debate. "My remarks on Consequences," he began, "have been strangely misunderstood, and therefore misrepresented."[63] Although the brief article's primary objective was to defend abolitionists from charges that they did not care about consequences, Scott used the opportunity to further address and articulate his view of the relationship between morality and consequences. This served as another substantial dividing line between both sides.

The difference did not exist on a spectrum with poles of prudence and recklessness; it was a paradigm divided between how both sides prioritized consequences. Ultimately, they

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[61] Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk. No. II.," 1.
[62] Scott, "Reply to Dr. Fisk. No. II.," 1.
[63] O. Scott, "Consequences," *Zion's Herald*, May 6, 1835, vol. 6, no. 18, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

disagreed over what Scott termed "our standard of duty." To act with consequences in mind was a natural and important consideration, Scott conceded, but he argued that it could not become the universal standard by which people acted because consequences were not a standard of duty. By emphasizing consequences above all else, Fisk and Whedon had therefore championed what Scott termed a "doctrine of imaginary consequences" that they had drawn from "The West India planters, and their friends." In doing so, Scott implicitly placed himself on the side of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, John Wesley, and the British antislavery movement. But he also juxtaposed the Whedon-Fisk standard of duty with his own. "The Bible, together with the laws of *equity* and *justice*, and not IMAGINARY consequences," he wrote, "should be our standard of duty." While Scott believed that one should "never act without considering the *probable results,*" he nevertheless believed that immutable religious principles should be given paramount consideration.[64] Where Fisk and Whedon thought that Scott had disregarded consequences, Scott's clarification suggests that he instead viewed consequences as a secondary point that did not usurp one's duty to promote the moral good.

Whedon's next article in the discussion, published at the end of April 1835, shifted the debate away from consequences and back towards the miscegenation subject that Scott had considered. His argument pivoted to what he called the "future general matrimonial amalgamation" and creation of "a uniform mass of mulatto*ism*."[65] In doing so, Whedon again illustrated a fundamental distinction between abolition Methodists and their opponents on the issue of race. Where Scott had viewed color as a largely superficial distinction, Whedon contended that race was an intrinsic and fundamental component to a person's identity and their

[64] Scott, "Consequences," 2.
[65] Given the concern and obsession with "isms" in the 19th Century, Whedon's decision to italicize "ism" after "mulatto" is worth highlighting.

very humanity. This distinction between races was “a perpetual line” and an “impassable gulf” established by “nature” and God. White and Black humans were, in Whedon’s eyes, essentially two different species. Although he promoted this biological determinism with a religious foundation, his article exhibited a surprising dearth of theological or scriptural authority. His argument largely rested on science and politics, not theology. The races of humans, he wrote, had distinct conceptions of beauty and he made this point by likening African Americans to animals. “To a frog, the perfection of beauty is a green back, a yellow belly, and a squat figure,” Whedon declared, adding that in the same way “to an African it is an ebony face, a woolly pate, and an ivory row of teeth.” Humans and animals, he then reasoned, were biologically programmed by “nature” to have “These different tastes....” His argument only returned to the metaphysical by acknowledging in the final sentence that biological impulses were “obviously implanted by a superior power.”[66]

Whedon opposed political equality on the grounds that it would counterintuitively widen the gulf between biological and social inequality. He based this claim on the premise that Blacks and whites could not coexist in the same body politic because racial tribalism was a biological force that made such a heterodox society inconceivable. Whedon’s argument again drew from science and the biological imperatives that drove animals to reproduce amongst themselves. In the same way that nature had “implanted” certain “tastes” on animals and humans, it had also provided them “aversions” as well. And Whedon assumed this eternal and impassible line of biological demarcation existed between whites and Blacks. Citing “the wretched negress” who would experience the “dormant repellencies” she felt for white people, Whedon concluded that

[66] D.D. Whedon, “Slavery. No. V.,” *Zion’s Herald*, April 29, 1835, vol. 6, no. 17, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

"she will reject the lord mayor for the attentions of his chimney sweep."[67] This perspective, however, assumed that racial animosity was inevitable, and the races would always devolve into competing groups, or what he termed "hostile elements" with different "feelings, interests, and tastes." And since Whedon assumed whites were inherently superior, he concluded that "Political equality then would not diminish, but in reality double the amount of repugnance."[68]

These racialist assumptions allowed Whedon to conclude that colonization cared for Black interests because the colonizationists, and not abolitionists, sought to save African Americans from an extinction that abolitionists would cause. He justified this position because the abolitionist perspective inevitably meant an eradication of race as a social, biological, and political construct while also creating the circumstances where Blacks would be trampled by what he termed the "ascendant race." Where abolitionists "would press the elements together" and create a "boiler" that would consume Blacks, colonizationists offered them "a safe asylum" from white supremacy.[69] For Whedon, colonizationists stood on the side of Blacks because they acted to protect an inferior race. Abolitionists, by downplaying the significance of race in nature, biology, and political economy, were acting against Black interests. While Whedon was not alone in championing this form of racial determinism, his vision of race as an immutable biological reality offers a clear foil with Scott's belief in a common humanity.

Two weeks later, the *Herald* published Whedon's "Slavery No. VI." This article served both as a promotion of colonization and critique of immediatism. Whedon understood the movement against slavery – colonizationist or abolitionist – as being united in favor of ending the peculiar institution. "*Emancipation*," he began, "with regard to the *thing*, we agree; we differ

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[67] Although "attentions" suggests a strictly romantic context, it is immediately followed by a discussion of "Political equality" that underscores how Whedon saw intermarriage and politics as two sides of the same coin.
[68] Whedon, "Slavery. No. V.," 2.
[69] Whedon, "Slavery. No. V.," 2.

as to the *mode*." For Whedon, this emancipation movement was subdivided into three "classes" which each promoted a different "mode" towards securing their shared objection. These groups were the "*Ultra Colonizationists*" that advocated colonization as the only solution; the "*Gradual emancipationists*" who favored colonization as the only "safe emancipation"; and the "*Immediatists*" who advocated an abrupt end to slavery.[70] All three movements, despite their differences, shared the same word: "emancipation."

By framing the discussion this way, Whedon accomplished two objectives. First, he offered a relatively conciliatory portrait of an antislavery unity of purpose in which each group sought to destroy the peculiar institution in their own way. When the differences between colonization or abolition were simplified down to differences of "mode" rather than "thing," it made the stakes of the discussion appear to the reader to be far less important than Scott had suggested. Second, Whedon tried to create a rift between "gradual" and "immediate" abolition by placing abolitionist heroes in the former camp. After describing Methodist theologian Richard Watson as a gradualist, he added: "I might quote similar sentiments from [William] Wilberforce, [Thomas] Buxton, [Henry] Brougham, and numbers of the leading advocates of liberty." All those names held distinction for the part they played in the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in Great Britain, but Wilberforce's name stands apart. Wilberforce was first among the abolitionists, a man whom immediatists regarded as one of their own due to his desire to see the slave trade immediately abolished in the 1790s. By invoking Wilberforce and the rest, Whedon sought to create a rift in the abolitionist ranks. He made this purpose explicit when he noted that "many who rank themselves among the immediate abolitionists" are "*gradualists* in fact, though immediatists in language." This served as a continuation of Whedon's earlier argument that

[70] D.D. Whedon, "Slavery No. VI.," *Zion's Herald*, May 13, 1835, vol. 6, no. 19, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

Scott's immediate abolitionism was a gradual emancipation that had adopted the "absurdity" and "bad practical effects" of immediatism.[71]

Scott's eleventh article was a clear, albeit indirect, rebuttal to Whedon's above statements. Where Whedon had classified colonizationists and abolitionists as standing united in their shared objectives, Scott opposed that characterization. They did not have mere differences of mode because colonization and abolition did not even want the same thing. Relying on a plethora of quotations from leading colonizationists such as Henry Clay and R.G. Harper, Scott argued that colonizationists and abolitionists were natural adversaries rather than allies. This adversarial relationship stemmed from organizational composition. Colonization, he observed, "acts without motive" and accepted anyone who supported "a colony in Africa" regardless of "reasons." This meant that the Colonization Society as an organization did not exist because of any first principles. It was a blank slate upon which its members could project their own desires and vision. That kind of organization, he warned, "becomes all things to all men."[72]

Scott, however, believed colonization was, at best, controlled opposition. The Colonization Society, he reasoned, was an organization founded by slaveholders and that it acted for the benefit of slaveholders. This did not, however, mean that Scott considered all colonizationists to be proslavery agents. It was, he said, "a house divided against itself." Some members, he conceded, were driven "by pure motives" that included evangelization. Nevertheless, he considered this perspective to be a "delusion" because "the most active supporters of the [Colonization] Society are slaveholders."[73] Colonization did not end slavery; it increased the economic value of existing slaves. Colonization did not ameliorate the abuses of

[71] Whedon, "Slavery No. VI.," 2.
[72] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XI.," *Zion's Herald*, May 20, 1835, vol. 6, no. 20, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[73] Scott, "Slavery. No. XI.," 2.

the slave system; it accepted the premise that slaves were property and refused to promote their education.

To Scott, then, abolitionists and colonizationists could not even agree on what Whedon had termed the "thing." But their differences went further. Colonizationists and abolitionists disagreed over the far more important question of *why*. Both groups were driven by different principles. In the case of colonization, the "many" as Scott put it, came to their position through racism and prejudice against African Americans. Their motive was "to get rid of what they conceive to be a bad portion of our population, without the trouble and expense of improving it." Invoking the image of a "drain" which could "carry off the filth of our country," Scott created a portrait of the colonization movement that was strikingly comparable to earlier English theories in favor of colonizing the Americas with what they considered to be the dregs of their society.[74]

Yet colonization did not merely reflect the racial animus of white America. Scott charged colonizationists with creating a culture of white supremacy and then using that culture to justify their policy as the only solution to the problem that they had themselves created. The Colonization Society, he argued, created the image of Blacks as being "the most degraded and debased of all the human species" and endorsed legislation designed to "oppress them." By removing the tools necessary for "their education and improvement," it created an environment which "compels them … to go to Africa." Colonization therefore promoted a self-fulfilling prophecy and then seized the mantle of savior. He wrote:

> Do colonizationists urge us to instruct them, and improve their condition? No! Send them to Africa to civilize and Christianize the natives!! Though they be the connecting link between human beings and monkeys, and the most abandoned of the creation of God, yet send them as missionaries to Africa!! The moment they touch the African shore, they will be transformed from demons incarnate to great and good men – Christians and statesmen!!! The operations of the Colonization Society, so far from having had any good

[74] Scott, "Slavery. No. XI.," 2.

> influence on our free colored citizens, have, more than any thing else, tended to strengthen public prejudice against them. Deny this who can.[75]

This assertion offers a fascinating window into Scott's worldview because it illustrates what he believed through what he rejected. Scott rejected Whedon's biological, religious, and racial determinism by exposing the fatal premise upon which some colonizationists acted. If free Blacks were unfit to live in the United States, how could they be expected to bring a "white" civilization and religion to Africa? This explains his emphasis on the sudden transformation. On American soil, African Americans were no better than animals and social dregs to be removed. On African soil, they were the champions of Christendom.

Scott then concluded his essay on colonization with a brief discussion of Christianity in Africa that offers insight into his own perspective on evangelization. This issue fell within the same framework as the Wheel of Reform, which treated politics as existing downstream from religion. Colonizationists operated from the opposite premise and, as such, believed that government drove religious and cultural change. This explained their desire to create a colonial government that could then help secure a foothold for Christianity in Africa. This scheme, however, inverted the Wheel of Reform. To Scott, government agents were ill-equipped for that that task. The people who composed colonial governments were "grossly immoral" because they drank alcohol, were inclined towards "licentiousness," and frequently exploited the natives. By contrast, Scott felt drastic political measures were not "necessary" or "essential" to the "redemption of Africa."[76] By touting the missionary as an alternative, Scott emphasized that church and society played an integral role in moral improvement. He further warned that prioritizing government action above all else would produce the opposite effect.

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[75] Scott, "Slavery. No. XI.," 2.
[76] Scott, "Slavery. No. XI.," 2.

This overarching critique of colonization, then, served as a rebuttal of Whedon's entire argument. Scott challenged his racial determinism and articulated a belief that colonizationists were driven by fundamentally different principles. The discussion between Scott and Whedon, then, was not a mere cordial disagreement over preferred methods on a single issue. It was an existential struggle over principle that drove them to pursue two diametrically opposing visions of church and state.

After his eleventh essay, Scott stopped writing this series for about nine months. This did not mean the issue of slavery returned to a dormant state. The gap between articles eleven and twelve stemmed from what Scott described in 1836 as "an almost endless variety of cares and labors."[77] In the time between the spring of 1835 and the opening months of 1836, he was a busy man in both personal and professional respects. The antislavery movement remained a cornerstone of his activity. Scott had helped galvanize what became a movement, and it continued to spread. In the spring, summer, fall, and winter of 1835, abolitionists continued to write for the *Zion's Herald*. At the same time, Scott and his newfound allies carried their essays into the realm of practical action. In an article from May 1835, Scott revealed his plans for the coming year with a brief but noteworthy line in which he mused aloud, "We have slumbered quite too long. Let the General Conference hear from us at its next session."[78] Preparing for the forthcoming General Conference of the entire Methodist Episcopal Church, which was to be held in Cincinnati, Ohio in May 1836, became his main concern. But if the entire church was to act against slavery, its two most antislavery annual conferences, New England and New Hampshire, first needed to be abolitionized.

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[77] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," *Zion's Herald*, February 24, 1836, vol. 7, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[78] O Scott, "For Zion's Herald," *Zion's Herald*, May 27, 1835, vol. 6, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

Although he stood among the first of the abolition Methodists, Orange Scott did not stand alone. In the weeks and months after he penned "Slavery No. I" and Benjamin Kingsbury opened the *Herald* to antislavery discussion, others began to write their own antislavery essays. This eventually promoted a literary melee in which different ministers and subscribers challenged and debated one another. At times, multiple different debates over slavery took place within the same number of the *Herald*. Phineas Crandall, the minister from Newburyport who had endorsed the antislavery discussion in March, contributed his own article to the discussion in which he challenged the biblical and apostolic justifications for slavery.[79] Charles K. True, a minister stationed in Boston, had articles published in the *Herald* during the spring and summer of 1835.[80] Jotham Horton also took an increasingly vocal position against slavery.

Most notably, however, the *Zion's Herald* became a platform for ministers to reach out directly to the Methodist public through a series of "appeals." In one such appeal, from May 1835, a quintet of ministers composed of Shipley W. Willson, A.D. Merrill, La Roy Sunderland, George Storrs, and Jared Perkins, published a lengthy appeal to the New England and New Hampshire conferences. The document and its subsequent addendum, which ran the length of four pages in the *Herald*, went straight over the heads of the church hierarchy and appealed directly to the people of the conferences. Although intended first as a circular letter for ministers, it evolved into a call for action among the laity as well. Like Scott, the authors cast themselves as the defenders of a traditional Methodist and Wesleyan morality. And they also understood the

[79] P. Crandall, "The Difference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 17, 1835, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[80] Charles K. True, "Letter to Rev. Daniel Filmore," *Zion's Herald*, July 1, 1836, vol. 6, no. 26, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

central "question" at stake as resting upon an inherently moral foundation: "*Is it a sin against God to hold property in the human species*?"[81]

But the abolition Methodists did not confine themselves to the written word; they turned those ideas into action. In the case of the New England Conference, Scott acted with their forthcoming annual conference in mind. When the 1834 annual conference had broached slavery and colonization, it was Scott who had supported laying potential resolutions on the table. With the question left unresolved, he had a year to formulate a plan to abolitionize the conference. Opening the *Zion's Herald* up to discussion was but one part of that plan. He employed every tactic at his disposal to inculcate immediate abolitionism within the bounds of his conference: preaching from the pulpit, distributing the *Liberator* to fellow ministers, and writing communications for the *Zion's Herald*. Individually, these measures made a difference. Taken together, then, they produced a powerful and transformative effect upon the conference.

Scott, however, did not confine this activism to the Methodist Episcopal Church. Having promised William Lloyd Garrison reinforcements in the larger struggle against slavery, he increasingly involved himself with the broader movement. From May 25, 1835, through May 28, 1835, on the eve of the New England Annual Conference, he traveled to Boston to attend the New England Anti-Slavery Convention, the regional arm of the broader American Anti-Slavery Society. He was not the lone Methodist: Sunderland and Storrs served respectively as secretary and vice president. Willson and Crandall also attended. The convention put Scott into contact with many noteworthy abolitionists: Henry C. Wright, Henry B. Stanton, Amos A. Phelps,

[81] Shipley W. Willson, Abram D. Merrill, La Roy Sunderland, George Storrs, and Jared Perkins, "Appeal to the Members of the New England and New Hampshire Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal. Church.," *Zion's Herald*, May 13, 1835, vol. 6, no. 19, p. 1-2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022); S.W. Willson, La Roy Sunderland, George Storrs, A.D. Merrill, and Jared Perkins, "Defence of the 'Appeal,'" *Zion's Herald*, May 13, 1835, vol. 6, no. 19, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022). This appeal was later published as a pamphlet.

George Thompson, and James G. Birney. These abolitionists and others would play a crucial role in the events that transpired in the following years.[82]

This was one of Scott's first antislavery conventions, and he played a limited role in its bureaucratic operations. He did not participate in the proceedings of the first or second days of the convection. The morning and afternoon sessions of the third day came and went, until it reconvened at 7:30 P.M, when Stanton rose to forward a resolution and deliver remarks in favor of its passage. His resolution, which held that "the people of the free states" shared culpability for slavery by their objections to the "examination and discussion of the subject."[83] The convention discussed the topic until about ten o'clock. John G. Whittier later recalled that an audience that had been "chained to their seats for hours" began to retire for the evening when:

> A plain looking man arose. Pausing to listen for a moment, the retiring audience became fixed. His first remarks elicited applause. Spurred on by this, he continued with increasing interest. To many, his illustrations were new and startling. I can never forget the masterly manner in which he replied to the objection that Abolitionists were blinded by prejudice and working in the dark. "Blind, though we be," he said, "aye, sir, blind as Sampson in the Temple of Dagon, like him, if we can do no more, we will grope our way along, feeling for the pillars of that temple which has been consecrated to the bloody rites of the Moloch, Slavery – grasping their base we will bend forward, nerved by the omnipotence of truth, and upheave the entire fabric, whose undistinguishable ruins shall mark the spot where our grandest moral victory was proudly won.[84]

The speech caught Birney's interest. Not recognizing the man, he asked around. "On inquiring, we learned, for the first time, the name of ORANGE SCOTT," he said, adding that his name

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[82] "New-England Anti-Slavery Convention," *Liberator*, May 30, 1835, vol. 5, no. 22, p. 86, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 16, 2022).
[83] "New-England Anti-Slavery Convention," 86.
[84] James G. Birney, quoted in Lucius Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 83. This account comes from Lucius Matlack's biography of Scott. Matlack, however, reached out to John G. Whittier, who wrote him a letter of his first meeting with Orange Scott. This quote is an excerpt from that letter. Whittier's account, however, does not offer a specific date. But the only evenings that Scott actively participated in the convention were May 27 and May 28. The proceedings only note that he made remarks on the 27th, suggesting Whittier's account applied to that day.

could be added "among the slave's ablest advocates."[85] The official proceedings of the convention subsequently referenced Scott's "interesting and pertinent remarks." The following day, on the evening of May 28, Scott offered his first resolution before the convention, urging the American Anti-Slavery Society to hold a national meeting in Philadelphia or "such other place farther south."[86] Scott's speech, however, had left an impression on Birney. While his oratory had caught the attention of many, it would be Scott's actions inside his church that earned him greater renown. In a short time, he would emerge as one of his denomination's paramount abolitionists. The Lynn Conference, less than a week later, became a barometer to determine whether the seeds of abolition Methodism had begun to bear fruit.

The annual meeting of the New England Conference was held in Lynn, Massachusetts from June 3 to June 13. By the summer, Scott's abolitionist faction appeared to be on the ascendency. One Methodist estimated in the *Liberator* that only about six percent of the ministers in the conference supported colonization. Those ministers, he added, "must by this time see, that to attempt to sustain Colonization much longer in New-England, is a *hopeless task*."[87] An anonymous correspondent to the *Liberator*, "Vermont," blamed what he referred to as "*the Middletown Divines*" for proslavery sentiment in the church. These professors, including Wilbur Fisk, Daniel Whedon, and their allies, promoted what he termed "Middletown Theology," a religious belief system at odds with "the Heaven-approved cause of Abolition."[88] The Lynn

[85] James G. Birney, quoted in Lucius Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 83.
[86] "New-England Anti-Slavery Convention," 86.
[87] A Methodist Minister, "Counter Appeal.," *Liberator*, April 25, 1835, vol. 5, no. 17, p. 66, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 15, 2022).
[88] Vermont, "Wesleyan University. No. V.," *Liberator*, June 13, 1835, vol. 5, no. 24, p. 2, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 15, 2022).

Conference was the ultimate test of whether that clique carried influence beyond Wesleyan University and if it could project influence across the annual conference.[89]

In some respects, the Lynn Conference was not extraordinary. It conducted the usual business of an annual conference, determining the stations of preachers for the next year, ordaining deacons and elders, and admitting ministers on trial into full connection with the church. Approximately 150 individuals – 104 ministers – attended the conference. The presiding elders of the conference's five districts and Bishops John Emory and Elijah Hedding were also present to oversee the conference. Attendees on both sides of the abolition question worked side-by-side on a host of topics from temperance to missionary matters.[90] Wilbur Fisk and Jotham Horton, for example, sat on a committee together to admit new ministers.[91] Although the issue of slavery loomed, a correspondent for the *Zion's Herald* described the opening days as a "very harmonious and fraternal session."[92]

Education and missionary labors were important considerations at the onset of the conference. Fisk therefore took an early lead in the affairs of the conference. On June 4, he read the report of the Missionary Education Society, an infant organization that he had helped form

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[89] In 1835, of the five districts in the New England Conference, two were run by anti-abolitionists: Bartholomew Otheman of the Boston District and Daniel Webb of the New Bedford District. However, their leadership did not necessarily reflect their district's views. Jotham Horton and Shipley Willson, for example, were stationed on the Boston District. Given that most of the ministers who signed an anti-abolition document known as the "counter-appeal" came from Middletown University or the Boston District, it suggests that Boston and the surrounding neighborhoods represented one of the few anti-abolition areas in the conference outside of Wesleyan University. See "N.E. Annual Conference," *Zion's Herald*, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022) and James Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1796-1910* (Boston, MA: Published by the Conference, 1910), p. 280-281, HaithiTrust (accessed August 15, 2022).
[90] "Untitled," *Zion's Herald*, June 10, 1835, vol. 6, no. 23, no. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[91] "Notice," *Zion's Herald*, May 20, 1835, vol. 6, no. 20, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022). "Missionary Sections," *Zion's Herald*, June 24, 1835, vol. 6, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022). Wilbur Fisk's Missionary Education Society drew support from abolitionists and colonizationists.
[92] "Untitled," *Zion's Herald*, June 10, 1835, vol. 6, no. 23, no. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).

during the 1834 annual conference. Given Fisk's support for evangelization and education, the society's objective of securing money that could train the next generation of missionaries served as the convergence of those interests. Fisk framed the issue in stark terms. "The youth of our Church must be educated, or the missionary work must be seriously embarrassed or restricted," the report declared.[93] In some ways, Fisk indirectly responded to Scott's criticisms that colonization had sent out unqualified individuals to serve as missionaries. "We want teachers, also, as well as preachers," he declared, adding that they would need physicians who could "get access to the soul, by doing good to the body."[94] The report was favorably received. A correspondent for the *Zion's Herald* described it as "a noble, straight-forward document" that "manfully defended the Methodist Church…."[95] Nathan Bangs, the senior editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, attended the convention as an observer and praised the society's "noble and philanthropic object" which he considered worthy of "the descendants of the pilgrims and the disciples of Wesley."[96]

Missions remained an important fixture because they were an area of overwhelming agreement.[97] Between Bartholomew Otheman's missionary society and Fisk's missionary education society, the two organizations raised a combined total of $3,352.78.[98] One attendee, an English-born member, lamented the number as a "paltry sum" because he believed the New

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[93] "First Annual Report of the Missionary Education Society in the N.E. Conference," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 17, 1835, vol. 9, no. 47, p. 186, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[94] "First Annual Report of the Missionary Education Society in the N.E. Conference," 186.
[95] "Untitled," *Zion's Herald*, June 10, 1835, vol. 6, no. 23, no. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[96] N. B., "A Trip to New-England. Correspondence of the Senior Editor.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 26, 1835, vol. 9, no. 44, p. 174, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[97] B. Otheman, "Report of the New England Conference Missionary Society," *Zion's Herald*, June 17, 1835, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[98] "Report. Of the Treasurer of the N.E. Conference Missionary Society, for 1835.," *Zion's Herald*, June 17, 1835, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022); *Zion's Herald*, June 24, 1835, vol. 6, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).

England Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church could be doing so much more. His opinion shocked Bangs, who reported that he "felt mortified" at the suggestion. For his part, Bangs had an optimistic view of the trajectory of church and believed the situation would only improve. Moreover, he believed the two organizations – the education society and the missionary society – should be "amalgamated" and used his three days in attendance to promote the idea among ministers of the New England Conference.[99]

One issue stood out from the others: slavery. In one sense, however, the conference could be said to act in harmony because abolitionists composed a supermajority. Orange Scott aptly encapsulated this in his autobiography, writing that "the Abolitionists had everything their own way" at Lynn.[100] They established a conference antislavery organization and overwhelmingly carried the day in the election of delegates to the upcoming general conference. These two victories reflected the extent to which abolitionism had permeated the New England Conference.

Within its first few days, this New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society was composed of over forty of the 104 attending ministers. Writing with "very great satisfaction," William Lloyd Garrison himself endorsed its principles as "thorough-going."[101] He did not exaggerate. The society's constitution emphasized the stark moral character of slavery, highlighted the humanity of enslaved Americans, condemned the right to property in people, and clamored for an immediate end to the peculiar institution.[102] The abolition Methodists also invited George Thompson to address them.[103] By virtue of the organization's name and its

[99] N. B., "A Trip to New-England. Correspondence of the Senior Editor.," 174.
[100] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 36.
[101] "Another Important Society," *Liberator*, June 6, 1835, vol. 5, no. 23, p. 3, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 15, 2022).
[102] "New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society," *Zion's Herald*, June 17, 1835, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[103] James Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 280-281.

platform, it further cemented the link between John Wesley and Garrisonian abolitionism. It also embodied the Scottite Wheel of Reform, with its "object" being to "obtain and spread information with regard to the colored population" and "enlist the sympathies of the Christian community in their behalf."[104] Like Scott, the society viewed ministers as a necessary means to bring moral truth before the people and ultimately "remove prejudice" against African Americans. The society's officers amounted to a who's who of abolition Methodists, with Shipley W. Willson being elected president, Joseph A. Merrill and Orange Scott chosen as vice presidents, Phineas Crandall serving as secretary, and a board of managers that included A.D. Merrill, La Roy Sunderland, Ephraim Scott, and others.[105]

The election of delegates for the general conference proved far more divisive. This tension stemmed from the fact that the selection process amounted to a proxy war between the abolitionist supermajority and their opponents. Fisk was joined at Lynn by a vocal minority of about nine other ministers who strongly opposed what they considered to be the insertion of nonreligious issues into the proceedings of an annual conference. The Lynn Conference, however, represented the culmination of everything Scott and his allies had worked towards. The abolitionists overwhelmingly carried the vote. Of the 104 ministers eligible to vote, Scott received 94 votes. Jotham Horton came in second with 84 votes. Wilbur Fisk, the man who had received 98.61% of the vote in 1827 and 94.36% of the vote in 1831 had fallen to 66.34% of the vote in 1835.[106] While still a comfortable majority, Fisk's margin of victory represented a

[104] "New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society," 2.
[105] "New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society," 2.
[106] James Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 191, 279. Lucius Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, 76. According to Matlack, Scott voted for Fisk as a delegate to Cincinnati.

seismic shift in the New England Conference. The rest of the elected delegates – including Merrill, Isaac Bonney, Reuben Ransom, and Crandall – were all abolitionists and Scott allies.[107]

This development frustrated Fisk, who, in line with the attitudes he expressed in his *Zion's Herald* communications, complained that the election "had been carried out on party principles" that did not belong in the church.[108] Because Fisk saw slavery as a domestic political matter, he regarded the abolitionist ascendency as a threat to the conference. Scott later recounted in his autobiography further details of Fisk's protest. In Scott's recollection, Fisk offered an ultimatum that another anti-abolitionist or colonizationist be selected to go to Cincinnati alongside him or he would refuse to accept the appointment. While Fisk's vacant position was filled by the like-minded Daniel Webb, Fisk's withdrawal produced a chilling effect. Both Horton and Ransom resigned their positions. Although they were replaced with abolitionists, Fisk nevertheless created a significant amount of drama.[109] Ironing out the final slate of delegates took a considerable amount of time, with the entire process lasting fifteen ballots across three days of deliberations.[110] The selection process had become so fraught that the New England Conference was the only annual conference that did not elect reserves.[111]

The news from the conference, however, prioritized its missionary work. While this framing of coverage could be touted as subtly praising Fisk and his Middletown faction at the expense of the abolitionists, it also underscores the way Methodists outside of New England viewed burgeoning agitation over slavery in the opening months of 1835. Almost all material of

[107] Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 279. "N.E. Annual Conference," *Zion's Herald*, June 17, 1835, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 2-3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[108] Fisk, quoted in Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 279, 307.
[109] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 34-35.
[110] Mudge, *History of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church,* 280.
[111] P. Crandall, "Delegates to the General Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, April 13, 1836, vol. 7, no. 15, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).

the conference published by the *Christian Advocate* in its immediate aftermath discussed missions and missionary education.[112] Likewise, the *Western Christian Advocate* filed conference news to its readers under its "Missionary Intelligence" section. And the *Christian Watchman* published a similar story about Fisk's new Missionary and Educational Society.[113]

Nathan Bangs, in his own account of the conference, offered a partial explanation for this dearth of coverage on abolitionism. He wrote briefly of the "abolition question" which he lamented was "pervading the Churches to a great and fearful extent." Bangs feared what he viewed as the "ruinous excess" of abolitionism and hoped the moderates could "purify it from its noxious particles" so that it would be "more fit for healthy respiration." This confidence that abolitionists could be tempered by veteran ministers like Fisk helped explain why the *Christian Advocate* and other religious papers largely ignored that dimension of the Lynn Conference. At least publicly, they cast it as the consequence of transitory passion rather than the paradigm shift that it was. Bangs encapsulated this view when he ended his ruminations on the "abolition question" with a declaration that was, in another sense, perhaps, a prayer: "May this be the effect of the present little hurricane, which is sweeping over the Churches of New-England!"[114]

This view proved to be a grave miscalculation. The emerging abolitionism was not confined to New England. The New Hampshire Conference also acted against slavery later that

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[112] See N.B., "A Trip to New-England," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 26, 1835, vol. 9, no. 44, p. 174, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022); John Lindsey, "To the Members and Friends of the New-England Conference," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 3, 1835, vol. 9, no. 45, p. 177, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022); "Report Of the Treasurer of the New-England Conference Missionary Society, for 1835," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 3, 1835, vol. 9, no. 45, p. 180, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022); and B. Otheman, "Report of the New-England Conference Missionary Society," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 10, 1835, vol. 9, no. 46, p. 183, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[113] See "New England Conference," *Western Christian Advocate*, July 3, 1835, vol. 2, no. 10, p. 38, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022); and "Methodist Missionary and Education Society.," *Christian Watchman*, July 17, 1835, vol. 16, no. 29, p. 115, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[114] N.B., "A Trip to New-England," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 26, 1835, vol. 9, no. 44, p. 174, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022)

summer and elected a slate of abolitionists to the Cincinnati Conference. These Methodists espoused a shared belief that slavery was fundamentally a religious and moral issue rather than a political one. More importantly, they believed ministers played an integral role in transforming public opinion on slavery and guiding the people down a philanthropic road.[115] This could not be reconciled with the prevailing anti-abolition view that the church should avoid controversy.

Abolitionism within the Methodist Episcopal Church was not a fleeting movement. Orange Scott and his allies ensured it would remain an enduring and powerful force. Seizing control of two annual conferences, the movement seemed poised to produce significant change. While outside observers ignored or downplayed it as a transient affair, these opinions underestimated the depth and breadth of the movement. Scott had inculcated abolition Methodism throughout his annual conference and used the *Zion's Herald* to take his case directly to the ministers and laity. Upon the foundations of a Garrison, he constructed an entire worldview that synthesized the aggressive impulses of immediate abolitionism with the religious fervor of a Wesley. This vision threatened not only the peculiar institution but the principles of racial determinism and right to property in people that gave it life. This allowed Scott to reconcile his radical impulses and conservative disposition because he framed his principles as a preservation of the past rather than a destruction of the present.

This worldview put Scott on a collision course with his own church. His belief that ministers were the inculcators of morality in society, irrespective of potential consequences, was diametrically opposed to the vision of church and state championed by Wilbur Fisk, Daniel

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[115] "Preamble and Constitution: Of the Anti-Slavery Society in the New Hampshire Conference," *Zion's Herald*, August 19, 1835, vol. 6, no. 33, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022); O. Beale, "Slavery.," *Zion's Herald*, July 22, 1836, vol. 6, no. 29, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022). P. Crandall, "Delegates to the General Conference," *Zion's Herald*, April 13, 1836, vol. 7, no. 15, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).

Whedon, and others. Fisk and Whedon, however, had been moderates; men who believed that Scott was overly zealous but misguided. Others in the church held far more antagonistic views of him and his worldview. Nevertheless, Scott's triumph over the Middletown faction represented a watershed moment. When he set out for Cincinnati, he was not simply expanding his debate with Fisk and Whedon. He was putting the annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in an existential conflict with one another over the church's very soul.

Chapter 7: The Clash at Cincinnati, 1835-1836

Freshly triumphant at the Lynn Conference, the New England abolition Methodists continued their campaign against slavery within the confines of their conference and their sister conferences in New Hampshire and Maine. Orange Scott's plan to promote abolitionism among the ministers of his conference had succeeded. Converting the church, however, had always been the first step along the path to emancipation and equalization. For the Wheel of Reform to work, the ministers needed to bring that message before the Methodist laity and the public at large.

The Lynn Conference caught anti-abolitionists and colonizationists completely by surprise. In the aftermath of the conference, several leading church authorities, including the *Christian Advocate's* Nathan Bangs and Timothy Merritt, wrote to Wilbur Fisk to express their shock. Although frustrated with New England's delegation, their overarching concerns rested on what they saw as the introduction of a "foreign and exciting subject" in church business. They at first assumed Fisk's personal charisma and popularity would defeat abolitionism and felt "regret" when the "heretofore unknown" movement seized control of the conference. Fisk, however, assured his compatriots that they would prevail over the Scottite insurrection. He hoped that what happened at Lynn could serve as an example for the other conferences to "be on their guard against the approach of the enemy." In his view, the other conferences needed to unite if the church was to be saved. "For what can a small majority in the New-England conference, aided even by a larger majority of the New-Hampshire conference hope to accomplish," he wrote, "when almost the entire connection [denomination] is opposed to them?"[1] While Scott and his

[1] "Interesting Correspondence," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, September 4, 1835, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 6, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 23, 2022).

supporters may have won a victory at Lynn against an unprepared adversary, they would not have the same advantage when they stood before the general conference.

This chapter chronicles Orange Scott's abolitionism from 1835 through the Cincinnati Conference in 1836. During this time, Scott emerged as an antislavery lecturer and leader but continued to focus on his own church. Given his successes in New England, Scott sought to spread his abolitionism beyond that region. His efforts to secure broader church action against slavery culminated at the general conference in Cincinnati. This confrontation would define Scott's abolitionism and his Methodism, strengthening his support for the former and shaking his faith in the latter. He had initially assumed that the national church was, at worst, apathetic and uninformed about slavery. After Cincinnati, he came to realize that church authorities harbored more hostility for abolitionism than they did for the South's peculiar institution.

This did not mean that Scott stayed aloof from the larger antislavery movement. As seen, he had attended the third annual meeting of the New England Anti-Slavery Society (NEASS) in and became friends with leading abolitionists such as Amos A. Phelps. In February, he traveled with Phelps to Portland, Maine to help organize a new antislavery society there and, during that trip, met with George Thompson, the traveling British philanthropist who had become a celebrity among American abolitionists. Scott, who described Thompson as "the eloquent and excellent George Thompson, the friend and advocate of the *friendless,*" preached about slavery during the convention.[2] Although Scott did not participate in the proceedings, he lectured on slavery alongside Thompson. During one of their lectures, a person threw a rock through a window to

[2] O. Scott, "A Watch Word for Mobs.," *Liberator*, March 21, 1835, vol. 5, no. 12, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 18, 2022). George Thompson, "Cumberland Convention.," *Liberator*, February 28, 1835, vol. 5, no. 9, p. 1-2, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 18, 2022).

keep him from speaking.[3] Episodes like that were commonplace occurrences in the 1830s as anti-abolitionists took an increasingly militant position against abolitionists. Their hostility to the freedom of discussion became a fixture of Scott's critique of slavery since he put freedom of speech at the center of his worldview. But his willingness to take a public position against slavery in Portland impressed one attendee in particular: a thirty-two-year-old woman named Eliza Dearborn.

Dearborn, born in Plymouth, New Hampshire on March 25, 1803 to Samuel Dearborn and Abigail Ward, was the youngest of twelve children. She had "abundant" and "dark" hair, a slender form, and what one observer described as "wonderful" mental acuity and "physical vigor." From an early age, she had an interest in reading and learning. Although her worldview was shaped by her Methodist minister father and her born-and-raised Congregationalist mother, Dearborn desired to set out on her own. Unlike many of her peers, she had the opportunity to pursue an education. When her father enrolled her in New Hampton, a school about fifteen miles from the Dearborn home in Plymouth, she refused to go because, as she later said, "I wanted to get away from the sight of the smoke of our chimney." She did this because she wanted greater autonomy. "I wanted to go away from home to school," she explained, and instead attended the Methodist school in South Newmarket. Upon returning home, she tended to her parents as they grew older and, upon her father's death in 1833, moved to Portland, Maine to stay with her sister and her brother-in-law. During her time in Portland, she met Orange Scott.[4]

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[3] "Mrs. Orange Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, February 1, 1899, Vol. 77, no. 5, p. 135, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed March 15, 2021).

[4] "Past the Nineteenth Milestone. "Mrs. Eliza Dearborn Scott, the Oldest Woman in Exeter – Father, Husband and Only Son Methodist Preachers.," *Boston Daily Globe*, March 27, 1893, vol. 43, no. 86, p. 5 ProQuest, Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe (accessed August 23, 2022). "Mrs. Orange Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, February 1, 1899, Vol. 77, no. 5, p. 135, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed March 15, 2021). Although none of the documents about the Cumberland Convention mention or confirm Scott's presence at the meeting, Dearborn's obituary indicates that she met Scott in Portland while he was traveling with George Thompson. The Cumberland Convention

Scott, still engaged in his debate in the *Zion's Herald* and tending to his ailing wife in the early months of 1835, nevertheless continued his antislavery activities beyond the strict confines of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the aftermath of a convention at Cumberland, and in response to an article by D.M. Reese in the *Christian Advocate* that condemned Thompson, Scott wrote his first official article as a correspondent for the *Liberator*. This essay, entitled "A Watch Word for Mobs," offers a window into Scott's views respecting the anti-abolition mob violence that had begun to sweep across the United States. It reveals a conservative yet populist disposition that shaped the broader mindset behind Scott's abolitionism. Scott's article, written as an apology for Thompson, promoted two crucial elements of his worldview.

First, Scott detested what he viewed as the mob. This skepticism, however, did not originate with him and was part of a longstanding conservative tradition in the United States. Nevertheless, Scott filtered this conservative inclination through the prism of class. Mobs were a weapon of the powerful, and the people who often galvanized the masses into action did so on behalf of existing power structures. "Mobs originate with the higher classes," he declared, adding that "the lower classes are merely the tools of the higher."[5] Elites used their control over the press to manipulate and direct the public. Unlike some populists and radicals, Scott did not necessarily see mobs as a voice of the dispossessed. They were not a collection of people; they were a weapon of the powerful. Scott's conservative sensibility against mobs, however, did not mean he supported the existing status quo. In the case of slavery, the anti-abolition elite could exploit popular animosity against their enemies by depicting a person like George Thompson as an existential threat to church and state.

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is the only recorded instance in 1835 in which Thompson is confirmed to have been in Portland, Maine. Therefore, the February convention stands to reason as a logical place where Orange Scott and Eliza Dearborn first met.

[5] O. Scott, "A Watch Word for Mobs.," *Liberator*, March 21, 1835, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 46, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 18, 2022).

Scott, however, did not believe elites could project absolute authority over mobs. Once galvanized, mobs had their own agendas and were therefore, in essence, a weapon that could be molded but not controlled. "Who will allay the elements when they are excited?" he asked William Lloyd Garrison, further musing, "Who can ride upon the whirlwind and direct the tempest?"[6] Scott's duality respecting mobs – that mobs were inherently a tool of the powerful and that mobs were dangerous because they could not be controlled once unleashed – provides crucial insight into his thinking. It underscores a conservative concern for mob violence while also maintaining a popular opposition to those in established positions of power.

The second point remains deeply connected with the Wheel of Reform. Scott objected to Reese's argument that Thompson should not lecture in New York since the state constitution had already banned slavery. In doing so, Scott echoed an argument famously championed by Edmund Burke about the nature of civil society: laws did not inherently establish order. Laws merely codified something which already existed in society. During the American Revolution, Burke had argued that social cohesion, "common names" and "kindred blood" as he put it, preceded political cohesion. "Do you imagine … it is the annual vote in the committee of supply, which gives you your army?" Burke had asked Parliament, "Or that it is the Mutiny Bill which inspires it with bravery and discipline?" The answer to him was clear. "It is the love of the people; it is their attachment to their government, which gives you your army and your navy," he said. "Without such an attachment and liberal obedience," he concluded, "your army would be a base rabble, and your navy nothing but rotten timber."[7]

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[6] Scott, "A Watch Word for Mobs.," 46.
[7] Edmund Burke, *The Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq; on Moving His Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies, March 22, 1775* (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), 60-61, Gale, Sabin Americana.

Scott, like Burke, challenged Reese on the same premise. The law alone had no meaning. It was what the people believed, what existed in their hearts and minds, which gave the law its true power. This meant that politics did not exist as a domain unto itself. It existed as a reflection of society and its social mores. A narrow legal victory, then, did not necessarily resolve the underlying problems unless the principles behind those laws prevailed across society. "And in the state constitution, I suppose, Doctor R. would be willing it [abolition] should *eternally* remain," he noted, adding, "Would it not be well if it were incorporated, also into his *physical and moral* constitution, and that of many others of his spirit!" To Scott, the sentiment which had once outlawed slavery in free states had decayed over time. The "moral constitution" of New Yorkers like Reese had wavered so that the legal constitution promulgated a position out of step with its citizens. In Burke's metaphor, this would be identical to the British relying solely on legal prohibitions against mutiny as their only refuge. Abolitionism may have been the law of the land in New York, but it was not the moral force of the land. The latter mattered far more to Scott than the former. "They call the discussion of slavery an 'exciting subject,'" he wrote, before continuing, "but why is it so? Because it brings to light the hidden things of darkness!" Antislavery agitation in the North had the potential to change public opinion to realign it with the positions it had once held.[8] Because Scott viewed the religious, the social, and the political as bound together, he opposed confining moral matters exclusively to the realm of politics.

In the fall of 1835, Scott was sanguine for the movement. During that time, he set down the pen and picked the mantle as a leader of the abolition Methodists from pulpit and podium. Beginning in the summer, he set out across New England as presiding elder of Providence

[8] Scott, "A Watch Word for Mobs.," 46. Scott suggested this during his debate with Whedon and Fisk, blaming colonization for poisoning public opinion against African Americans. This suggests that Scott believed the North was traditionally inclined towards abolitionism. Therefore, in line with his conservative and restorative rhetoric, he simply wanted to conserve or recover something that he believed had been lost.

District and antislavery lecturer. He attended the New Hampshire annual conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire that was held at the end of July and beginning of August, delivering a sermon that Benjamin Kingsbury praised as "very eloquent and impressive."[9] During this time, he cultivated what he later termed "a short but agreeable acquaintance" with Eliza Dearborn, the antislavery woman that he had met in Portland.[10] It was not long before the two set their sights on a potential marriage.

The New Hampshire Conference encapsulated the successes of the Methodist antislavery movement as well as the institutional and geographical challenges it faced. The conference's committee on slavery issued a report that excoriated the South's peculiar institution and urged greater action by "*the whole Christian community*."[11] The conference report, written by a committee that included Jared Perkins, D.I. Robinson, and John F. Adams, did not necessarily say anything that had not been said before but was significant because it wanted to spread its message beyond New Hampshire. The committee forwarded copies so that the *Zion's Herald* and *Christian Advocate and Journal* could publish it. While Benjamin Kingsbury published it within a week of receiving it, the *Christian Advocate* took a different position. Before they had even received the request, Bangs and Merritt co-authored a statement in which they declared, "the New Hampshire Conference have no jurisdiction over the editors of this paper, neither as editors

[9] Benj. Kingsbury, "Letters from the Editor.," *Zion's Herald*, August 12, 1835, vol. 6, no. 32, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 15, 2022).
[10] Orange Scott and Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott complied from His Personal Narrative, Correspondence, And Other Authentic Sources of Information* (New York: C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack, at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1847), 35. There are few details about Scott and Dearborn's relationship outside of Scott's suggestion in his autobiography that things moved very quickly. Given that Dearborn's hometown of Plymouth, New Hampshire, and her residence in 1835 of Portland, Maine, were far away from Scott's district, his occasions to meet her would have been sparse. Scott's trip to Portsmouth, New Hampshire for the New Hampshire Conference during the late summer would therefore be a logical opportunity for them to have reconnected after Portland, Maine. Lending credence to this theory is a lamentation for the loss of a man identified only as "DEARBORN" in Benjamin Kingsbury's letter to the *Zion's Herald* while he was in New Hampshire. This could have potentially been Eliza Dearborn's father, Samuel Dearborn, a New Hampshire Methodist.
[11] "Report:," *Zion's Herald*, September 30, 1835, vol. 6, no. 39, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).

nor as preachers."[12] They published news from the conference but, like the Lynn Conference before it, largely omitted coverage of slavery.[13] Because the *Christian Advocate* answered to the national church, the implications of their refusal were clear: abolition Methodists in New England and New Hampshire could not expect many allies outside their conferences.

After the New Hampshire Conference, Scott returned to Springfield and began his tour of the district. He intermixed these institutional obligations with a series of lectures on slavery in several of the towns he visited during the months of August and September, including Lowell, Worcester, and his then residence of Springfield. Most of these lectures across Massachusetts and Rhode Island proved uneventful, with one major exception.

On August 10, 1835, while in Worcester to deliver a lecture on slavery at the invitation of the local antislavery society, Scott was confronted by a group of young men led by Levi Lincoln, Jr., a sitting U.S. Congressman and the son of a former Massachusetts governor.[14] Lincoln and his posse, which included what the *Worcester Spy* described as "a stout Irishman" named Patrick Doyle, confronted Scott while he was speaking. When Scott refused to acquiesce to Lincoln's demand that he leave Worcester, things took a violent turn. Lincoln snatched Scott's notes while Doyle grabbed Scott and tried to drag him out of the meeting. A few attendees confronted Doyle

[12] N. Bangs and T. Merritt, "Report of the New Hampshire Conference on the case of Rev. G. Storrs.," *Zion's Herald*, September 3, 1835, vol. 6, no. 35, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[13] "New-Hampshire Conference. Stations of the Preachers," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 21, 1835, vol. 9, no. 52, p. 207, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 23, 2022). "Course of Study in the New Hampshire Conference," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, September 4, 1835, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 8, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 23, 2022). Nathan Bangs and Timothy Merritt only published material related to the institutional affairs of the annual conference and ignored the request from conference secretary E.J. Scott to include the report on slavery.
[14] "Twenty-Fourth Congress," U.S. House of Representatives, https://history.house.gov/Congressional-Overview/Profiles/24th/ (accessed August 19, 2022).

and successfully freed Scott, but the damage had been done. Lincoln ripped up the notes and departed once it was clear the meeting was over.[15]

The Worcester incident was not an uncommon event, but the attack generated outrage among abolitionists inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church. An indignant William Lloyd Garrison republished the original *Worcester Spy* account of the incident and explicitly highlighted the names of Levi Lincoln, Jr., and Patrick Doyle "in black letters." Considering Scott to be one of the Methodist Episcopal Church's "most estimable ministers," Garrison excoriated what he considered "the disgraceful affair" at the hands of "respectable mobocrat" Lincoln and his "ruffians."[16] The *New York Commercial Advertiser* picked up the story and, although unsympathetic to Scott's views, said "shame on any man, high or low, who can … smile at such an atrocious act perpetrated against a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ."[17] J.T. Burrill, a Worcester resident and eyewitness to the attack, believed it was "a specimen" of "the spirit of LAWLESS VIOLENCE" that had been "spreading through our land." The stakes were high. Mobs like the one that tried to silence Scott in Worcester, Burrill argued, threatened to eradicate America's civil and religious institutions. Others, looking back on history during and after the tumult and desolation of the antebellum years and the Civil War, came to regard Scott's mobbing in Worcester as an example of the dangerous trends Burrill identified.[18]

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[15] "Breach of the Peace.," *Liberator*, August 15, 1835, vol. 5, no. 33, p. 131, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 17, 2022); "Another Gag Act," *Liberator*, August 15, 1835, vol. 5, no. 33, p. 3, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 17, 2022); "A Small Affair.," *Zion's Herald*, August 19, 1835, vol. 6, no. 33, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 17, 2022).
[16] "Another Gag Act," *Liberator*, August 15, 1835, vol. 5, no. 33, p. 3, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 17, 2022)
[17] "Doggrel.," *Zion's Herald*, August 26, 1835, vol. 6, no. 34, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 19, 2022).
[18] J.T. Burrill, "A Small Affair.," *Zion's Herald*, August 19, 1835, vol. 6, no. 33, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 17, 2022). Democrat Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire invoked Orange Scott's mobbing on the Senate floor in a debate in 1850. Republican Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts also included the Worcester episode in his history of the Civil War, referring to Scott as "an early, consistent, and persistent opponent of slavery." See John Parker Hale, "Speech of Mr. Hale, of New Hampshire, on the Territorial Question." ProQuest. Slavery & Anti-Slavery Pamphlets from the Libraries of Salmon P. Chase and John P. Hale (accessed

Benjamin Kingsbury, covering the story of Lincoln's "VILLAINY" in the *Herald*, offered the most vocal defense, declaring:

> The mob will never stop such a man as ORANGE SCOTT. Tear his notes, gentlemen, if you please, he will bring up fresher and purer genius still forth from the deep mine of his intellect – *and preach on*. Tear his coat ... he will get it repaired – *and preach on*. He is a man of indomitable courage and perseverance, and nothing but molten lead poured down his throat, or a red-hot gagging iron in his mouth, or a conviction that he is wrong, will hush his eloquence. The mob have mistaken their man.[19]

Kingsbury's emphasis on the word "preach" to characterize a nominally secular event encapsulates the mentality of abolition Methodists. They fundamentally saw their actions as an extension of their religious faith. Inside the Methodist Episcopal Church, they sought to purify their church and its institutions from the taint of slavery; outside the church they wanted to evangelize and convert the public to become apostles of abolition.

On Monday, August 17, Scott inaugurated a weeklong camp meeting at Northbridge, Massachusetts, a town situated a few miles southeast of Worcester. It began with a promising start, with a large gathering and "fine" weather on the first two days that resulted in an estimated "20 or 30 serious persons" coming forward for prayer. Poor, rainy weather from August 19 through August 22 interrupted the public exercise portion of the camp meeting and forced the crowd to disperse to their tents. Nevertheless, Scott boasted that those present had persevered through the rain, hearing two sermons from the stand and over fifteen from inside their tents.[20]

February 22, 2023), 8. Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in the United States of America*, vol. 1, HeinOnline (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), p. 280.

[19] "Doggrel.," *Zion's Herald*, August 26, 1835, vol. 6, no. 34, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 19, 2022); "A Small Affair.," *Zion's Herald*, August 19, 1835, vol. 6, no. 33, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 17, 2022).

[20] O. Scott, "Camp Meeting.," *Zion's Herald*, September 2, 1835, vol. 6, no. 35, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 20, 2022). "Board of Visitors," *Zion's Herald*, July 1, 1835, vol. 6, no. 26, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 19, 2022); "Wilbraham Academy," *Zion's Herald*, August 26, 1835, vol. 6, no. 34, p. 135, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 8, 2022). From August 12 through August 19, before and during the camp meeting, the Wilbraham Academy conducted their annual examination, a celebratory event which preceded a short vacation for students. Scott, who had been appointed to serve on the academy's Board of Visitors during the Lynn Conference, attended and delivered the closing prayer on August 19.

Saturday, August 22, Scott wrote, "was ushered in with a clear sky and pleasant sun," bringing out an estimated five thousand. But much like the Worcester incident, the camp meeting ended abruptly when a group of "miserable wretches" took to the stand, creating "tumultuous noises" and preventing the congregation from engaging in public exercises. These "rioters," as Scott described them, began attacking congregants with clubs. The scuffle left three ministers injured, one with "a heavy blow to the face," and ended with the sheriff making "Seven or eight" arrests. Although the incident was resolved, the assailants, like Lincoln and his associates, successfully brought a premature end to the camp meeting. While Scott characterized Sunday as "an excellent love feast," a series of "lively and interesting" sermons, and successful "public exercises," most people feared more violence. When Scott left in the afternoon to speak with the assailants in jail, the minister he put in charge prematurely concluded the meeting at 3 pm.[21] Although Scott did not attribute a motive to the assailants, the camp meeting reflects his general antipathy towards mob violence. When Lincoln threatened him, Scot continued to speak until the crowd had been dispersed. When confronted at Northbridge, he wanted the camp meeting to end at its appointed time. He believed ministers should defy the mob rather than submit to it.

In August and September, Scott and several of his abolition Methodist allies, Shipley Willson, La Roy Sunderland, Phineas Crandall, and Joseph A. Merrill, wrote an address directed at the membership of the New England Conference about their new Methodist antislavery society. Published as a weekly series of four articles in the *Zion's Herald* from August 26, 1835 to September 16, 1835, the address was designed to introduce readers to "the sin of Slavery" that "is now prevailing to such an alarming extent in the Christian churches, and among the people of

[21] Scott, "Camp Meeting.," 3. "I very much regret this circumstance," he wrote of the early cancellation, but said he could not fault the "good brother" who made the decision.

this nation."[22] The articles followed a logical course, beginning with an introductory indictment of slavery, continuing with an outline of the alternative, responding to common objections, and concluding with a discussion of duty. Many of the ideas which Scott championed in his articles in the *Zion's Herald* became its central cornerstones.

The address, like Scott's articles, emphasized the humanity of enslaved Americans as a central fixture of its spiritual, intellectual, and sentimental argument. This remained the cornerstone of Methodist abolitionism generally. Slavery, in the framing of the writers, was "A question which involves the dearest interests of millions of your species!" They further defined the peculiar institution as "the possession and using of the bones, sinews, flesh and blood, and souls of human beings, as *property*."[23] In another instance they referred to slaves as "the bodies and the immortal minds of God's intelligent creatures."[24] The specificity of language was crucial because, like Scott, the address refused to cede premises to slavery, including the idea that a person could be held as property. The humanity of the enslaved had always been an underlying consideration for Scott. Everything wrong with slavery stemmed from the fact that it was a sin that did violence to God's creation. This is significant because, as the writers noted in their second article, slavery did not have what could be considered "abuses" because "the system itself' was the problem.[25] Scott's view that slavery was a sin in all circumstances quickly became the orthodox position among abolition Methodists.

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[22] Shipley W. Willson, Orange Scott, La Roy Sunderland, Phineas Crandall, and Joseph A. Merrill, "Address.," *Zion's Herald*, August 26, 1835, vol. 6, no. 34, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[23] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, "Address. No. I.," 4.
[24] Shipley W. Willson, Orange Scott, La Roy Sunderland, Phineas Crandall, and Joseph A. Merrill, "Address. No. III.," *Zion's Herald*, September 9, 1835, vol. 6, no. 36, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[25] Shipley W. Willson, Orange Scott, La Roy Sunderland, Phineas Crandall, and Joseph A. Merrill, "Address. No. II.," *Zion's Herald*, September 2, 1835, vol. 6, no. 35, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

In addition to sharing Scott's premise on the humanity of enslaved Americans, the address also echoed his understanding of the endpoint of abolitionism. In "Slavery No. I," Scott had argued that immediate abolition was a process that started with emancipation and concluded with the restoration of slaves to their rightful place as equals with whites. In "Address No. II" and "Address No. III," Scott and the other writers touted the same program. They wrote:

> [T]he slave owner...should *cease immediately* to hold or to use human beings as his *property*.… [T]he master, so far as he is personally concerned, should immediately offer to employ those whom he has held as his property, as free hired laborers; he should not turn them loose upon society, uncared for and unprotected, but he should treat them as men, and give them the liberty of choice, whether to remain in his employ at fair wages or not. ... So far as the State is concerned, it should annihilate the right of man to hold man as property; and all who are now slaves should be immediately brought under the protection and restraint of suitable and impartial laws. But the want of action on the part of any State government ... should not and need not hinder any one from doing his duty as above described….[26]

This definition of "immediate abolition" is nearly identical to the one championed by Scott over seven months earlier. The address did not confine its content to an abstract realm which could be stripped of its political, religious, or social elements. In "Address No. II," the writers called for equal justice between Blacks and whites and contended that the law should not discriminate. In "Address No. III," they carried Scott's rhetoric on common humanity and his belief that slaves were "citizens" to their logical conclusions. Abolitionism did not mean a simple absence of slavery; it inevitably required an elevation that would end with "the colored population" enjoying "the privileges of civil society."[27] In some respects, the use of "civil society" represented a more radical step than the one that Scott had even championed months earlier because it implied a political *and* social equality that Scott had hinted at but not detailed.

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[26] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, "Address. No. II.," 4.
[27] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, "Address. No. III.," 4.

Like Scott, the address cast temperance as a forerunner and template for abolitionism and touted moral suasion over political revolution. Nevertheless, this was a moral suasion informed by the Wheel of Reform. “We hope to succeed in our labors to bring about the entire abolition of slavery,” the writers declared, “by means like those which we have used for the suppression of intemperance.” This strategy began with religious and philanthropic action from moral and religious leaders but culminated with what they called “bring[ing] the church of Christ to feel the SIN of *slaveholding*” and political and legislative action abolishing slavery in Washington, D.C. and the territories.[28] This framework, which succinctly encapsulated Scott’s Wheel of Reform, offers crucial insight into how abolition Methodists saw the relationship between church and state. Both institutions played crucial but complementary roles in promoting the moral betterment of society, and the persons who composed society had two separate but interconnected identities: members of the “church of Christ” and “citizens of this Republic.” Only when those two identities acted in concert could great moral evils, from intemperance to slavery, be combatted.

The address, while Scottite in its temperament and rhetoric, also echoed three significant points that are integral to understanding not only Scott’s subsequent movements, but those of his fellow abolition Methodists. The series of articles served as a clarion call for action by members; mobilizing the reinforcements that Scott had promised William Lloyd Garrison. Scott and his fellow writers outlined their objections to slavery, responded to fears that antislavery agitation would have dire consequences, and outlined the duties of Christian abolitionists.

As Scott’s debate with Daniel Whedon and Wilbur Fisk in the spring and summer had illustrated, the struggle over slavery encompassed more than the peculiar institution. Slavery, in

[28] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, “Address. No. II.,” 4.

some respects, became the flashpoint that exposed an even wider rift between abolition Methodists and the Methodist Episcopal establishment. The principles at stake illustrated this reality. This subject will be explored in greater detail later, but the objections to slavery which Scott and the other writers presented to Methodists in “Address No. II” highlight many of the core tenets of their worldview. Their objections to slavery echoed the same critiques found in Scott’s eleven articles: they concurred with Wesley’s original definition of slavery as “man-stealing”; they believed slavery “annihilates the family state” and degraded the sanctity of marriage; they believed slavery violated the rights to conscience by stripping people of their autonomy and their right to receive compensation for the fruits of their labor; and they believed that it curtailed religious liberty. These things together challenged the idea that slavery could be considered anything less than a religious matter. It was not, as some claimed, “‘a political subject!’” All nine of their objections to slavery, even the “reasonable compensation” one, were fundamentally religious and biblical questions.[29] Framing slavery in this way not only gave them a justification to engage in antislavery agitation. It made agitation a matter of duty, and one which they required support from the church. This set abolitionists and their critics in the Methodist Episcopal Church on a collision course because slavery exposed the way that both sides held opposing views of the very purpose of religious institutions in a republican society.

In “Address No. III,” the writers then examined an issue which Scott had encountered in his debate with Fisk and Whedon: the very dangers of a discussion. They looked at five different but interconnected objections to immediate abolitionism that were united by a fear of

[29] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, “Address. No. II.,” 4. The “unreasonable compensation” objection invoked Jeremiah 22:13 (KJV), which reads, “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages and giveth him not for his work.” This argument echoed and foreshadowed the free labor ideology argument that became the cornerstone of the antebellum Republican Party.

consequences. Four of these five largely dealt with Scott's articles: concern that agitation would destroy the Union, claims that abolitionism would retard the amelioration of slavery, worries about anti-manumission laws, and a belief that slaves would be worse off in freedom.[30]

While comparable with what Scott had previously written, the responses to these concerns are noteworthy because they expanded on what came before. Three instances are especially illustrative. First, with respect to fears of a dissolved Union, the writers echoed Scott's assumption that those concerns were entirely speculative. Instead, they mused that slavery might pose a greater a risk of disunion than abolitionism. Second, they challenged the argument that abolition would worsen the plight of the slaves by taking aim at its biblical premise: the account in Exodus in which Moses' appeals were met with worse abuses. The writers dismissed that claim by observing that his actions eventually resulted in freedom even if the Israelites struggled in the short-term. Moreover, this case provided the authors with the opportunity to clearly contrast their worldview with that of their opponents. Anti-abolitionists, they argued, believed in the supremacy of human law by refusing to "obey God, in pleading the cause of the oppressed." They further crystallized this argument in their response to fears over southern laws that had prohibited or restricted manumission. Citing the prophet Daniel's defiance of a law that banned the worship of God, they observed how "he [Daniel] submitted to a bad law in suffering its penalty, instead of sinning himself by obedience to its injunctions." There was a higher law than manmade laws. The writers, invoking St. Peter, instead urged readers to "obey God rather than man."[31]

Finally, the address concluded with a discussion of the duties that abolitionism imposed upon Christians. This rhetoric, which rested on a duality that recognized the rights of the

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[30] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, "Address. No. III.," 4.
[31] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, "Address. No. III.," 4.

enslaved and the responsibilities of slaveholders and bystanders, had been discussed in the three articles leading up to the September 16 finale. Nevertheless, "Address No. IV" culminated with a clear and explicit discussion of three principal obligations that expanded upon the Wheel of Reform. First, Christians had the duty to "constantly and fervently pray for them [the slaves]." But the writers not only wanted prayers for slaves; they wanted abolitionists to pray for slaveholders and politicians as well. These calls to prayer show the Wheel of Reform in action because the writers wanted God to "give them [slaveholders] hearts of pity" and imbue the "councils of our nation" with the political will to act. But prayer was only one duty of the abolition Methodist. The second required them "As Methodists" to call for a restoration of their church to its former positions. Citing facts and precedent that supported this view, the writers concluded that the church needed "a redeeming spirit" upon which it could reclaim the antislavery ground it had once occupied. "We begin to see that we have been inactive too long," they wrote, noting that "while we have been slumbering over this subject, the 'enormous evil of slavery' has been increasing upon us ten fold every year." In particular, they set their sights on the general conference. "Let petitions be drawn up, addressed to our next General Conference," they urged, believing petitions would force the church hierarchy to "restore to the Discipline those rules before quoted."[32]

This perspective remained deeply rooted in a worldview that saw religious and political action as interconnected. To show that moral reform preceded political reform, the writers noted that slavery "will never be checked ... nor removed from this nation till the Christian Church sets

[32] Shipley W. Willson, Orange Scott, La Roy Sunderland, Phineas Crandall, and Joseph A. Merrill, "Address. No. IV.," *Zion's Herald*, September 16, 1835, vol. 6, no. 37, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).

her face against it,...."[33] Abolition Methodists, then, were part of an antislavery vanguard that could bring the abolition message before the public and eventually the politicians. They were bound to oppose slavery as Christians and as "citizens, also, of this great Republic." Abolition, then, began at the pulpit but did not end there. "The doors of Congress are open to your petitions for their liberation," Scott and the others wrote, arguing that church leaders – from presiding elders to class leaders – should take the lead by organizing and collecting petitions. Undergirding these views was a shared assumption among abolition Methodists that the religious and the political could not be confined to separate spheres. Slavery, the writers feared, "is now sapping the foundation or our otherwise fair Republic, and eating out the very vitals of the Christian Church."[34] Only through united action against slavery in the religious *and* political sphere could it be abolished. As a result, the address promoted a comprehensive strategy against the peculiar institution that united abolition Methodists' identities as Christians, reformers, and Americans.

During the publication of the Appeal, Wilbur Fisk penned and submitted a farewell letter to the New England Conference on the eve of his voyage to Great Britain to attend the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. Although nominally his "last salutations and affectionate adieu," he believed it was his duty to use the statement as an appeal for the conference to change its course on abolitionism. "Another series of articles is about to be inflicted upon the church," he wrote to Benjamin Kingsbury about the four-part "Address." Although he in part reiterated his fears of division in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Union, he offered greater clarity into his beliefs on slavery specifically. "Say, *if you will*, it is a wrong," he wrote of proslavery "feeling"

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[33] This statement was not confined to the Methodist Episcopal Church because the writers spoke in the same sentence of "her branches" in a reference to a broader Christian church.
[34] Willson, Scott, Sunderland, Crandall, and Merrill, "Address. No. IV.," 4.

in the South, he nonetheless concluded that "still it exists."[35] Because southerners would not change their opinion, it stood to reason that slavery must be accepted. To do otherwise would be to risk civil war. Offering a dire prognosis for the national future, Fisk wrote:

> Unless this misguided and delusive course should be relinquished, the country is ruined. And when Northern abolitionists have accomplished their work of desolation, over the fairest portion of the political and ecclesiastical world, who will there be to raise the song of triumph? None but demons below, and despots on earth. The abolitionists themselves, when they see the result of their own blind and obstinate measures, will join in the general lament. And their sorrow will be the more poignant, because their own hands will have done the deed.[36]

Fisk's perspective, however, was diametrically opposed with everything Scott and his allies had championed for nine months. Where abolition Methodists believed it was the duty of the church to promote moral truth, Fisk instead suggested that even moral wrongs should be tolerated if opposition to them produced greater harm.[37] Where Scott believed the church existed as an unchanging pillar of objective morality, Fisk promulgated an opposing vision of the church that emphasized the preservation of order with morality carefully filtered through the prism of consequences. Both men and their allies believed they were fighting moral evil; but understood that struggle in competing ways because they disagreed about the role of church in society.

To further reinforce his point about coming calamity, Fisk cited a southern Methodist minister who had written to warn him that the Union would be dissolved in eighteen months because of the Lynn Conference. The minister not only told abolition Methodists that the South would protect slavery; he called on northern Methodists to help the South. "The majority of the

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[35] W. Fisk, "Farewell. Letter of Rev. Dr. Fisk.," *Zion's Herald*, September 23, vol. 6, no. 38, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[36] Fisk, "Farewell. Letter of Rev. Dr. Fisk.," 1.
[37] "Petitioning Congress on Slavery.," *Zion's Herald*, October 7, 1835, vol. 6, no. 40, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022). Before departing Wesleyan University, Fisk received a petition asking the U.S. Congress to abolish slavery in Washington, D.C., which he refused to sign because "I utterly despair of any direct measure of even *prospective* emancipation in the present feverish state of public feeling."

North are against the [abolition] movement," he said, "but what of that? Can they, by legislation, or other interference, stay the tide of incendiary publications? This is the one thing to be done, at some rate and at all hazards." Northerners, the minister suggested, needed to curtail the discussion of slavery and, if the law would not suffice, then individuals needed to do so through "other interference." This letter became Fisk's rallying cry for an end to the discussion. "I would that our friends … could see and hear what I see and hear," he lamented, arguing that the evils of slavery paled in contrast with the horrors that awaited its agitation.[38] Although Fisk did not call for censorship like his anecdotal "clergymen of our own church, of high standing," the stakes created an environment in which mob violence could thrive. Fisk did not rebuke it; he simply accepted it as a reality. Abstract rhetoric of consequence, then, quickly transformed into a more tangible mobocracy as it progressed from the academic theories of colonizationist professors to the uncontrolled passions of the anti-abolition mob.

On September 26, 1835, three days after the *Zion's Herald* published Fisk's farewell letter, Orange Scott and Eliza Dearborn filed their intention for marriage. Ten days later, on October 6, 1835, the two were married in Portland, Maine by Dearborn's brother-in-law.[39] After their marriage, the couple moved to Holliston, Massachusetts, a move which Scott had intended to make earlier in his presiding eldership but had postponed while tending to Amey Fletcher at the end of her life. The couple completed the move by the end of October, with Scott telling readers of the *Herald* to send his mail to Holliston. Holliston was a logical destination for the Scotts. Situated east of Worcester, north of Providence, and south of Lowell, it was in the middle

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[38] Fisk, "Farewell. Letter of Rev. Dr. Fisk.," 1.
[39] Ancestry History, Maine, U.S. Marriage Records, 1713-1922, Maine State Archives; "Marriages.," *Marine Farmer and Journal of the Useful Arts*, October 9, 1835, vol. 3, no. 36, p. 287, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 19, 2022); *Zions Herald*, November 4, 1835, vol. 6, no. 49, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 19, 2022).

of Providence District and therefore allowed Scott to travel across his district more effectively. Although a relatively small town with just over 1,200 residents as of 1830, Holliston's geographic advantages offered the same benefits that the centrally positioned Springfield had provided during Scott's tenure as presiding elder there.[40]

Eliza Scott, like Amey Scott before her, became an ally in the work of her husband while also managing the home and tending to the growing Scott family. Where Amey Scott had assisted her husband in his religious labors, Eliza Scott supported Orange Scott in the antislavery cause. While Scott had arrived at abolitionism as a recent convert, his second wife had held those views from an early age and acquired them from her mother. "My mother hated slavery in her inmost soul," she later recounted.[41] She ran the Scott household by tending to the Scott children in the frequent absences of her husband and made the home a "refuge of 'abolitionists.'"[42] And as Orange Scott widened his social circle with abolitionists, Eliza Dearborn became acquainted with many of the men and women who became active in the movement: Neal Dow, Theodore Dwight Weld, and Sarah and Angelina Grimke.[43]

The Cincinnati Conference, however, loomed over all developments. In anticipation of the coming clash between abolitionism and anti-abolitionism, Methodist bishops Elijah Hedding and John Emory issued a pastoral letter designed to warn the New England and New Hampshire Conferences to cease their agitation. But Hedding and Emory's warning struck a different tone from Wilbur Fisk. Where Fisk had *implored*, Hedding and Emory stopped just shy of

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[40] 1830 U.S. Census, Ancestry History, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/1296991:8058?_phsrc=fRG52&_phstart=successSource&ml_rpos=1&queryId=163ff6598488bdc082aadb172c90f9bd (accessed August 23, 2022). Year: *1830*; Census Place: *Holliston, Middlesex, Massachusetts*; Series: *M19*; Roll: *67*; Page: *75*; Family History Library Film: *0337925.*
[41] Eliza Dearborn, quoted in, "Mrs. Orange Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, February 1, 1899, Vol. 77, no. 5, p. 135, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed March 15, 2021).
[42] "Mrs. Orange Scott.," 135.
[43] "Mrs. Orange Scott.," 135.

demanding. Abolitionism, they wrote, was "a deep political game" and undermined an important "principle": deference for "the established laws of intercourse between states and nations as they are." But Hedding and Emory did not write a pastoral letter to two conferences to simply relitigate what had already been said. They wrote to deliver a warning. They declared:

> We entreat, therefore, that none of you will take part in such measures, or in any others calculated to inflame the public mind with angry passions, and to stir up civil or ecclesiastical strife and disunion, in violation of our solemn vows. And if any will persist in so doing, whether from the pulpit or otherwise, we earnestly recommend to our members and friends everywhere, by all lawful and Christian means, to discountenance them in such a course. The presiding elders, especially, we earnestly exhort to discountenance such practices, both by their counsel and example. And if any, of whatever class, go beyond their own bounds, or leave their proper appointments, whether under the pretext of agencies or otherwise, to agitate other societies or communities on this subject, we advise the preachers, the trustees, and the officials and other members to manifest their disapprobation, and to refuse the use of their pulpits and houses for such purposes.[44]

While Hedding and Emory assured readers this did not serve as a breach of the "right of any individual," they argued that "The principles of positive compact" required certain behavior.[45] But Orange Scott, Shipley Willson, and George Storrs were among their clearest targets. All three had conducted antislavery business in violation with the new precepts of the pastoral letter.

The Hedding-Emory letter, then, proved to be a significant development because it represented the first explicit ecclesiastical action against abolitionism. Although the policy did not have teeth, it nevertheless employed what had already become a recurring theme among anti-abolitionists: marshalling popular sentiment to stifle discussion. Where Fisk had protested antislavery speech, Hedding and Emory openly called for abolitionists to face "discountenance"

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[44] Elijah Hedding and J. Emory, "To the Ministers and Preachers of the M.E. Church within the New-England and New-Hampshire Annual Conferences.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, September 25, 1835, vol. 10, no. 5, p. 17, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 23, 2022).

[45] Hedding and Emory, "To the Ministers and Preachers of the M.E. Church within the New-England and New-Hampshire Annual Conferences.," 17.

for their actions. Although they added the modifier of "lawful and Christian means" and cannot be said to have called for violence, their assertion marked a continued shift within the Methodist Episcopal Church towards institutional and public censorship of dissent. And most alarming to Scott and his allies, they wielded that power in the name of silencing discussion of an important moral issue in the name of placating popular opinion.

These efforts were not confined to the bishops. Bangs and Merritt, for example, used the *Christian Advocate* to further cultivate an anti-abolition narrative. Taking to the *Zion's Herald*, the abolition Methodists responded. Their "Protest," signed by thirty-eight ministers and members, criticized the *Christian Advocate and Journal* for publishing a letter that a collection of anti-abolition ministers had written in the weeks after the Lynn Conference. The document offers a window into a burgeoning rift within Methodism over the question of church government. The signers of the "Protest" complained that these attacks, coming from people outside the New England Conference, undermined their conference's right to autonomy. "Who made them judges over us?" they asked.[46] The "Protest" made "conference rights" a point of emphasis. "We protest against this communication," they wrote, "because it is a DIRECT INTERFERENCE WITH OUR CONFERENCE CONCERNS." To the signatories, annual conferences were entitled to a degree of independence, especially regarding the choice for delegates to a general conference. The *Christian Advocate*, then, was "a specimen of 'foreign interference'" in the affairs of the New England Conference. The protesters, however, argued that the primary motivation for the *Advocate's* coverage of the Lynn Conference had been to establish a narrative which could "FORESTALL THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW ENGLAND

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[46] Important abolition Methodists, including Orange Scott, Joseph A. Merrill, Ephraim Scott, Phineas Crandall, Shipley W. Willson, La Roy Sunderland, and Jotham Horton, were among the signatories.

DELEGATION IN THE NEXT GENERAL CONFERENCE."[47] The narrative that the Lynn Conference chose delegates on a "partisan" basis, which Fisk had first touted at Lynn and others had subsequently amplified, tainted the delegation before they even had a chance to interact with other Methodists.

This disagreement over conference rights intersected with the recurring question of the larger role of the church in society. Where Fisk, Whedon, Hedding, and Emory had each championed a vision of religion in which the church existed to preserve order, the abolition Methodists believed the opposite to be true. "We are for peace, with RIGHTEOUSNESS," they declared, "we mean to discountenance every principle and every action which may be calculated to prevent the prevalence of these heavenly graces in the Christian church and throughout the world."[48] Just as Scott had argued months earlier, the signatories championed a brand of religious fervor in which the church existed to promote a universal and eternal standard of morality. The church had a greater purpose than to simply protect existing power structures.

The irony of the anti-abolition argument, at least as espoused by the church's hierarchy, is that it rested upon the assumption that the preservation of order necessitated disorder. It required censorship and enforced silence, either through the institutional levers of power or the physical suppression of antislavery voices. While leading church authorities had publicly deprecated mob violence, Scott argued that mobs were a result of the effort to brand abolitionists as incendiaries who threatened the harmony of church and state. Challenging and overcoming what he considered the dangers of the mob became a central tenet of his antislavery writing as the anti-abolition counterrevolution grew more militant.

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[47] "Protest.," *Zion's Herald*, October 21, 1835, vol. 6, no. 42, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[48] "Protest.," 2.

In a November article, "Mobs, Etc., Etc.," Scott further integrated his hostility to mobs into the framework of his Wheel of Reform. Mobs represented an existential threat to that entire enterprise because they stifled the ability of ministers to preach on moral issues that produced excitement and public backlash. Referencing Alexander Pope, Scott reasoned that moral evil – the "Monster of such frightful mien" – could only survive if people "*keep still – perfectly still*!"[49] This quote, originally a reference to a personified Vice, illustrates the way Scott personified slavery. It was not merely an institution; it was an entity. Slavery, he continued, had survived for fifty years under the U.S. Constitution because it had successfully imposed "a death-like silence" upon the nation. By championing abolitionism, ministers and philanthropists broken the "charm" that slavery cast upon the people and inspired "the hitherto spell-bound" public to act.[50] Mobs, then, were simply an act of desperation by slavery because its supporters could not win a moral argument on the merits. In line with that, Benjamin Kingsbury refused to publish a response to that article on the basis that it was written anonymously and did not "discuss" anything so much as it offered "a collection of disconnected sophisms and interrogations."[51] Anti-abolition rebuttals like that only reinforced Scott's overarching point. He believed freedom of speech was an essential component of reform since it secured change by protecting the ability to persuade. Events like the Lynn Conference further convinced Scott that slavery's demise was inevitable. Only the destruction of republican liberty could prevent that. Slavery could not save itself; only anti-abolitionism could do so by disguising the destruction of republican liberty as its salvation.[52]

[49] O. Scott, "Mobs, Etc., Etc.," *Zion's Herald*, December 2, 1835, vol. 6, no. 48, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[50] Scott, "Mobs, Etc., Etc.," 2. O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," *Zion's Herald*, February 24, 1836, vol. 7, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 24, 2022). In "Slavery No. XII," Scott continued to personify slavery, writing that he had "nothing to do" with slaveholders because "my warfare is with Slavery."
[51] *Zion's Herald*, December 16, 1835, vol. 6, no. 50, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[52] Scott, "Mobs, Etc., Etc.," 2.

By destroying republican liberty, anti-abolitionists would destroy the vehicle which had made slavery's end possible: the Wheel of Reform.

Scott's argument that anti-abolition mobs were the last bulwark of slavery rested on the premise that anti-abolitionism represented an inversion of everything it claimed to vindicate. The mobs sought to stop what they considered to be incendiary discourse yet "bid defiance to all law" and "excite anarchy and disorder"; they feared disunion and yet "prepare the way for a division of the Union!" In the same way that mob's actions were diametrically opposed with its purported goals, the underlying logic of anti-abolition violence assumed that antislavery speech was inherently an act of violence and that abolitionists were therefore responsible for the violence that befell them. "They have," Scott wrote of the anti-abolitionists, "succeeded in raising a tremendous storm … and now they point to these troubled elements, and say, – 'See! What these Abolitionists have done!'" Anti-abolitionists, then, justified their violence by claiming that they were defending the Union and slavery from those who were attacking them. But abolitionism, according to Scott, was not violent in rhetoric or action. "The DOCTRINES and MEASURES," he wrote, "tend to a PEACEFUL and BLOODLESS result." Anti-abolitionists assumed immediate abolitionism inexorably required violence and therefore saw the language of abolitionism as an act of violence. But to Scott, the choice for how slavery was to be abolished rested with the slaveholders themselves, not the abolitionists. "It may be peaceful, bloodless, and glorious," he declared, or "it may be by general insurrections."[53] If slavery was ended by violence, then, the culpability lay with slaveholders and anti-abolitionists, not the abolitionists.

In the face of the anti-abolition worldview – which regarded words as violence and perpetrators as victims – Scott presented a different perspective through his Wheel of Reform.

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[53] Scott, "Mobs, Etc., Etc.," 2.

Freedom of speech and its ancillary liberties – the rights to petition, assemble, and write – became the connective tissue that linked the parts of the wheel together. Although anti-abolition vigilantism threatened to undo the entire enterprise, Scott remained confident that earlier, historical manifestations of reform proved that the mobs in defense of slavery would fail. His worldview held that a person engaged in a moral evil was responsible for their actions, not the person who informed them that they had done something wrong. “It is not a very difficult thing,” Scott wrote, “for wicked men to find excuses of some kind for their wickedness.” If anti-abolitionism hoped to get abolitionists to reconsider their speech out of self-preservation, Scott defiantly countered: “We are ready to give up our lives, but not our principles.”[54]

On January 20, 1836, Scott attended an antislavery convention in Northampton, Massachusetts to deliver one of the major speeches at the gathering. Scott’s speech reiterated much of his public statements he had made since January 1835, but he crystallized much of his worldview in the short but succinct address. Freedom of discussion was an important theme and he explicitly connected it to the Wheel of Reform. “Discussion,” he said, “must be had on this subject, or the slaves must be slaves forever.” He soon carried this point further. “If you arrest discussion, you arrest the progress of *all* reforms,” he declared, adding that temperance reform would have failed without it. When turning back to the recurring question of consequences, he again objected to making them a paramount consideration. Faced with the dissolution of church and state, he bluntly retorted, “the slaves have rights as well as the Church and the Union.” The greatest failing of consequence-dictated morality, however, was its lack of faith. “Go on then to

[54] Scott, “Mobs, Etc., Etc.,” 2.

its accomplishment," he instead concluded. "Do it *kindly*, do it *quickly*, do it *thoroughly*, and God will take care of consequences."[55]

Although the general conference loomed, Scott did not focus exclusively on abolitionism. The antislavery movement was an important component of his larger ambitions to inculcate moral virtue and promote conversion across the nation. Abolitionism was an extension, not a replacement, of his religious labors. He continued to tour his district and attend quarterly meetings. He described the final six months of 1835 – the first half of his second term as presiding elder of the Providence District – as being characterized by "good revivals of religion" and "refreshing seasons."[56] During the fall and winter, he estimated that over five hundred had been converted, with the Methodist Episcopal Church retaining four hundred of them.

Nevertheless, Scott was still dissatisfied. "The *state of discipline*," he complained, singling out quarterly meetings in particular, "might, and ought to be greatly improved." But he did not simply outline complaints; he offered solutions for Methodist ministers. This came down to what he identified as the root problem: "Punctuality." In Scott's opinion, members risked becoming backsliders because of sparse attendance at quarterly meetings, class meetings, and love-feasts. The problem, however, was not confined to the members alone. Ministers needed to play a more active role. "Do the preachers visit the delinquent members, and explain to them the consequences of continuing to neglect their class meetings?" he asked. He surmised that the problem stemmed from the fact that Methodist classes were too large, arguing that they should be capped at "twelve of fifteen persons" instead of the "thirty to fifty" that he frequently

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[55] "Anti-Slavery Convention in Old Hampshire.," *Liberator*, February 13, 1836, vol. 6, no. 7, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 8, 2022). Scott also spoke on questions of miscegenation and immediate emancipation that largely repeated his *Zion's Herald* articles.
[56] O. Scott, "Providence District.," *Zion's Herald*, January 13, 1836, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 24, 2022).

encountered on his district.[57] He then methodically outlined the events and functions of quarterly conferences in his district to highlight what he termed the "little things" which he said mattered because "they are, nevertheless, very important."[58]

While the shortcomings that Presiding Elder Scott saw on his district suggest in part that his abolitionism had, as Fisk predicted, distracted him from his ministerial duties, his meticulous outlining of potential solutions to the problems he encountered indicate that he continued to act as a presiding elder. This is an important point because anti-abolition Methodists had contended that abolitionism inherently came at the expense of religious and institutional responsibilities. In the case of Scott's tenure as presiding elder of Providence District, he did what he needed to do: promote and preside over revivals and camp meetings, tour his district, evaluate the state of things, diagnose problems, and offer solutions. Continuing this trend of promoting revivalism, Scott inaugurated the new year, 1836, with a protracted meeting at Holliston, which he reported to Benjamin Kingsbury as a success. "The prospect is good – *very good*," he explained of the revival.[59] These revivals characterized Scott's tenure as a minister from his beginnings in itinerancy to his elevation to presiding elder. Even as he took up the mantle of abolitionist, he continued to view revival and conversion as a core part of his identity. As a presiding elder, however, much of the hands-on responsibility to participate in revivals had been taken out of his hands because he had risen to a more administrative position.

During the opening months of 1836, Scott also engaged in a brief but cordial debate with abolition Methodists allies Jotham Horton and Phineas Crandall over ministerial compensation.

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[57] "Twelve of fifteen" is exactly how the writing appears, but it is likely the "of" is an error in transcribing and that Scott meant "twelve or fifteen." Benjamin Kingsbury also left a footnote to Scott's comment adding that he had seen class meetings of a similar size in Boston, thereby vouching for Scott's point that this represented a systemic issue in the New England Conference.
[58] Scott, "Providence District.," 2.
[59] *Zion's Herald*, January 6, 1836, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).

This debate over Scott's call for "a thorough reform in our financial concerns" – including how to support ministers – highlights the ways he was a reformer. His first inclination was to improve, not eliminate, the things he believed to be deficient. Framing his argument with populist undertones, he complained that "The economy of the Methodist Church, at present, is to keep her ministers poor." Although a largely arcane debate, it nevertheless offers insight into Scott's vision of unity and his belief that people of shared principle should largely set aside their differences. The amicable nature of the debate reflected the parameters for cooperation. Although Scott disagreed, he nevertheless concluded that "My object and brother Horton's *is the same*." This became the foundation upon which unity was constructed. Individuals could stand united in common cause even when they disagreed about the most effectual means to realize shared goals. For their part, Horton and Crandall adopted a similar tone even as they offered a defense of the existing system of compensation. Although Horton hoped to avoid "further controversial remarks" with "my highly respected brother Scott," he nevertheless emphasized that the disagreement was one over "the best mode of improving our financial interests" and how to interpret the Discipline. It was not a dispute over first principles.[60] Crandall also carefully qualified his criticism of Scott. "On most points I have the good fortune to agree with brother Scott," he wrote, "but on the subject of his late communication I must differ from him."[61] In making his case, however, Crandall offered an interesting window into Scott's mode of thinking: he believed in advocating policies that he believed to be morally right regardless of what law, precedent, or institutions decreed. "Brother Scott's statement is better commentary on what he

[60] O. Scott, "Ministerial Support.," *Zion's Herald*, March 2, 1836, vol. 7, no. 9, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 24, 2022). J. Horton, "Ministerial Support.," *Zion's Herald*, March 23, 1836, vol. 7, no. 12, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 24, 2022).
[61] P. Crandall, "For Zion's Herald.," *Zion's Herald*, March 16, 1836, vol. 7, no. 11, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 22, 2022).

thinks the law should be," Crandall observed, "than on what the *law* is."[62] As Scott had already demonstrated in his debates over slavery, the church and its ministers existed to advocate for what was right regardless of questions of expediency or consequence. This short-lived debate illustrated that this mindset permeated Scott's mode of thinking beyond the issue of slavery.

During the fall and winter months of 1835, Scott had remained so preoccupied with his antislavery activities and his duties as presiding elder that he neglected his antislavery articles. When he finally wrote "Slavery No. XII" in February 1836, he complained that "an almost endless variety of cares and labors has so engrossed my attention as to leave me scarcely a fragment of time." In that time he had attended antislavery conventions, led Methodist abolitionists at the Lynn Conference, lectured on slavery in several towns, married his second wife and moved to Holliston, toured his district three times at the various quarterly meetings, and offered a plan to better organize the church at the circuit level. On February 12, rectifying the "unfinished state" in which he had left his articles, he wrote "Slavery No. XII." But rather than finish his series with a twelfth number as he had originally intended, Scott extended his series with a new set of articles on emancipation. This decision stemmed from a belief that one could not adequately discuss the topic in a single essay. Circumstances since June 1835, he wrote, had given him "a still clearer and stronger conviction that my course, and that of the Abolitionists, in general, is sanctioned by HIGH HEAVEN!"[63]

Any discussion of emancipation, however, required readers to properly understand slavery. For Scott, this required an examination into "the moral character of Slavery" since the only path forward would be "to settle the question respecting the SIN of Slavery." Here he

[62] Crandall, "For Zion's Herald.," p. 1.
[63] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," *Zion's Herald*, February 24, 1836, vol. 7, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 24, 2022).

crystallized his belief in moral absolutes since slavery was either right or wrong in all circumstances. "If it be right in the sight of God," he wrote, "let it be continued – if it be wrong, let it, with every other thing that is wrong, be put away." Making this stark moral contrast even clearer, he wrote:

> Slavery (by this term I mean the holding of man as property) is either morally right, or morally wrong, or there is no *moral character* attached to it. Will it do to say, that a system which degrades and debases the image of God ... is *without moral character*! ... And would not the sentiment that such a system is *morally right*, be still more barbarous? Can any one suppose that the God of heaven looks with indifference or approbation upon such a system? The thought is preposterous! Slavery then is *MORALLY WRONG*. Or in other words it is a flagrant SIN against God, and the rights of humanity.[64]

Scott contrasted this perspective on morality with the anti-abolition framework that determined morality by existing circumstances.[65] For Scott, slavery was wrong because the "*principle*" which animated it – the right to property in man – was an absolute moral evil. He rejected, then, the argument that the "*best state*" of slavery was a lesser evil because *all* forms of slavery had been built upon the same moral foundation.[66]

"Slavery No. XII" expanded on this first point by discussing the dilemma of the slaveholder who wanted to manumit their slaves but lived in a state with laws that prohibited it. This discussion, while it retraced familiar ground, provides insight into Scott's understanding of law and justice. Although he assumed slaveholders, who had written the laws against manumission, could simply repeal them, he used the opportunity to make a larger, more theological point. "Do not these laws contravene the laws of God?" he asked before adding, "if so, can they be binding?" Scott, like his abolition Methodists allies, believed in a higher law than

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[64] Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," 2.

[65] Scott considered the argument that slavery was good under all circumstances to be "absurd" and therefore critiqued the "*some* circumstances" school of thought. But Scott's opinion was clear: "if the *principle*, that one man can hold property in another is a sinful and wicked principle at all it is so under all circumstances."

[66] Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," 2.

human laws. The concept of a higher law had been promulgated throughout the centuries by philosophers and theologians, but Scott traced this concept back to its original authors: the Hebrew prophets and the Christian Apostles. "When the powers that be, contravene the powers that are from above," he wrote, "the doctrine of the apostles is, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto GOD, *Judge Ye*."[67]

Scott's belief in the absolute supremacy of God's law led him to embrace what can be considered a form of moral nullification. Prefacing his remarks with a disclaimer that he opposed "nullification in all its forms," he offered one exception: "when human laws nullify the laws of the great Jehovah – LET SUCH HUMAN LAWS BE NULLIFIED. No human tribunal shall exercise a censorship over my allegiance to Heaven!"[68] Human laws, in Scott's worldview, existed to embody divine law as best as realistically possible. They only deserved a person's allegiance when they aligned with God's commands and with the moral good. Turning back to the question of the slaveholder seeking to manumit his slaves, Scott had a simple reply: "let the conscientious slave-holder emancipate his slaves," even if it came with the penalty of imprisonment. "Yes, but what of that?" he asked before answering, "It would not be the first time that good men have been punished for doing right."[69]

"Slavery No. XII" is one of the most significant works that Orange Scott produced because it demonstrates the ways in which slavery revealed the fundamental differences between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists over the role of religion in society and the very nature of morality itself. For Scott, morality was not contingent upon circumstances; it was rooted in

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[67] Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," 2. Scott paraphrased St. Peter from Acts 4:19.
[68] This is undoubtedly a reference to John C. Calhoun and his supporters during the Nullification Crisis. Scott, however, juxtaposed the conflict between divine and human law. "God says, 'break every yoke and let the oppressed go free.' But no, say the slave laws, 'the yokes shall not be broken.'"
[69] Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," 2.

immutable principles. In the case of Slavery, the "palliating or aggravating circumstances" did not matter because "the *principle* remains uncharged." Slavery, then, was "*evil*, *only* evil, and that *continually*."[70] Scott's moral nullification echoed his Wheel of Reform and called for people to prioritize their loyalty to God over nations. Governments, in his view, existed to establish moral order over humanity and God's churches existed to instruct the people in that morality; when governments abrogated those responsibilities, the Christian should reject their authority because those institutions had already nullified the higher law that they answered to.

Benjamin Kingsbury was quick to advertise the new series. "We invite attention to these numbers," he wrote, urging readers to take advantage of the present "age of discussion and revolution" by pursuing greater knowledge. Kingsbury touted Scott's articles because he wanted to involve the totality of the New England Conference, laity included, on the questions of slavery and abolition. "What was formerly left to the 'minister' to think about," he wrote, "*laymen* consider. The world is taking the extraordinary privilege of thinking for itself." He ended his promotion of Scott's articles with a similar call for greater discernment: "Read brother Scott's articles, and all that may be published on the other side, *and then make up your own opinion*."[71] While Kingsbury's coverage certainly favored the antislavery position, he nevertheless displayed a willingness to encourage a culture of free, open, and candid discussion by publishing opposing voices and letting their arguments stand on their own merits.

Scott soon found a new antagonist, a correspondent for the *Herald* named "H.D.," who had been in Georgia during the 1835 discussion. Based on his "personal observation and calm reflection," the correspondent wrote to Kingsbury to inform him of his newfound belief that "the

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[70] Scott, "Slavery. No. XII.," 2.
[71] "Rev. O. Scott's Articles.," *Zion's Herald*, February 24, 1836, vol. 7, no. 8, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).

Anti-Slavery movements ... have been productive of much evil." H.D.'s argument, in many respects, illustrated a widening gulf between Scott and his rivals. He subscribed to what Scott had characterized as the morality of circumstances because his argument against abolition rested upon the premise that slavery had "evils" but that those evils were aberrations that could be cured or ameliorated. His language made this clear. "The system has its evils," he admitted before clarifying that such evils could be removed of their "objectional features." Slavery was not wrong because it was wrong, as Scott had argued; it was only wrong in the circumstances where specific individuals acted contrary to what H.D. called "reason, humanity, and religion."[72] The widening gulf of these two divergent moral systems cannot be underestimated because it illustrated a disagreement that extended beyond slavery.

Scott postponed his "Slavery. No. XIII" article to respond to H.D. After offering a list of "'eye witness'" observers who painted a very different picture of slavery, he recounted his own recent experience of meeting an elderly Black woman who had been separated from her husband while she was enslaved.[73] For Scott, H.D.'s argument that slavery could be ameliorated occupied special attention. Quoting H.D.'s concession that "The system has its evils!", Scott responded: "Indeed! And what is the 'system' itself? What is the nature of the tree that bears this 'evil' fruit?" He answered with a reference to John Wesley: the system was "a system of the most complicated and highhanded villainies." Christianity could not ameliorate slavery; it could only destroy slavery. For Scott, circumstantial morality failed because it separated the manifestations of a sin from "the system." By contrast, his absolute morality saw results as the direct fruits of a

[72] H.D., "[From a Southern Correspondent.]," *Zion's Herald*, February 17, 1836, vol. 7, no. 7, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[73] Scott added that she had "related in a few minutes more instances of cruel and [in]human treatment to slaves ... than I have published in all my numbers [sic]." He then relayed one anecdote from her in which her son had been subjected to 400 lashes on the Sabbath.

system. Citing John the Baptist, Scott argued that a wicked tree could not produce good fruit and that the only solution to an evil system was to destroy it.[74]

On March 16, the *Herald* published Scott's thirteenth article, "Immediate Emancipation." Immediatism, he wrote, was "the conclusion [that] appears to me irresistible" when one accepted that slavery is "under ALL circumstances SIN." If something was always a sin, according to Scott, it ought to be discontinued at once regardless of expediency or consequences. To support this view, he referenced St. Paul's call to the Athenians from Acts 17:30 – "*Now* commandeth he *all* men *every where* to repent" – and then placed emphasis on the words "now," "all," and "every where" by italicizing them. Scott selected the words deliberately since they addressed common counterarguments against immediatism: objections to timing and concerns over state laws. He then reiterated his belief that principles manifested in real ways. To defeat tangible moral evils, reformers needed to confront the underlying principles. He juxtaposed principles and the real world through a duality of "the *abstract*" and "in *practice*." For Scott, slavery could only truly be abolished when its underlying abstract principles were destroyed. "The *principle*," he wrote of the right to property in people, "is the spring that puts this whole machinery of complicated villainies in motion – but for this principle the system could not exist a moment!" That principle, he warned, was "the corrupt foundation" that "Sends forth ten thousand poisonous streams through the heritage of God" and "opens the flood gates of iniquity."[75]

Scott, however, placed greater emphasis on explaining what he was *for* rather than what he was *against*. As illustrated, he viewed immediatism as a process that began with emancipation

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[74] O. Scott, "Notice of 'H.D.,'" *Zion's Herald*, March 9, 1836, vol. 7, no. 10, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022). Scott wrote, "Christianity will indeed exert an influence upon Slavery – but in order to this, let her 'spirit and principles' be brought to bear directly, not merely upon some of the evils, but upon the system itself. Let the axe be laid 'at the root of the tree,' and let it be kept there till this corrupt system is destroyed, 'root and branch.'"

[75] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XIII. Immediate Emancipation.," *Zion's Herald*, March 16, 1836, vol. 7, no. 11, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).

and ended with equality. In that sense, he distinguished "emancipation" from "abolition" by stating that the former was the first stage in the latter. For Scott, abolitionism did not simply entail the end of chattel slavery; to do so would only stop the symptom of the larger problem because the principle that had animated slavery – the right to property in people – still endured. Instead, abolitionists needed an alternative model for society which could successfully eradicate that principle. He wrote:

> By *immediate emancipation* it is not meant that the slaves should be turned loose upon community *without law* – but that they should be emancipated *into law*. Suitable legal provisions should be made to meet the exigency of such an event. Slaves are not now known in law, except as *goods and chattels*. Let the whip be immediately abolished – let subjugation to an irresponsible tyrant be immediately put away – and let good and wholesome laws take the place of these – let black and white men be punished by the *same laws for the same crimes*.[76]

The opposite of slavery was not simply a mere emancipation; it was the construction of a system built upon the principle that was an anathema to slavery: equality of all before the law. If slavery relegated slaves to the status of property, then the solution was to not simply free slaves being held as property: it was to recognize them as equal human beings.

Scott, then, argued emancipation was a beginning rather than an endpoint. "Immediate emancipation does not necessarily imply equal political rights and privileges," he wrote, observing that "This is a question for after consideration." Immediate emancipation, however, required an instantaneous end to chattel slavery and a system of legal equality to replace it. Abolitionism, however, pressed further and went into the realm of political and social equality. "It might be a difficult task to show why the color of a man's skin should disfranchise him of his rights," Scott observed. Scott, however, viewed political rights as a secondary consideration to

[76] Scott, "Slavery. No. XIII. Immediate Emancipation.," 2. Scott used the phrase "into law" in his earlier speech at Northampton in January 1836. He also promoted equal justice before the law during that speech, calling for former slaves to be "placed under *good* instruction and *equal* laws."

legal equality. Citing Rhode Island's voting restrictions, he argued that these restrictions may be wrong but did not equate to "*a state of slavery*" even if he agreed that it "falls something short."[77] In his view, slavery deprived people of their legal rights and their spiritual dignity. Abolitionism, then, was a process of reclamation rather than innovation because enslaved Americans had always possessed the rights that slavery denied them.

The last major contribution from the thirteenth article was its continued emphasis that slavery was a moral issue with a political component. "We are all well aware," he conceded, "that political or legislative action will be required to abolish Slavery where it exists." But Scott did not believe political action alone would solve the problem. Although it could remove slavery from the capital and stop it from spreading, it could not address the problem of slavery in slave states. "*Moral suasion*," he declared, "is the lever with which they [abolitionists] intend to move the nation and the world." While other abolitionists had championed political action or moral suasion as the optimal means to secure the end of slavery, Scott's argument is significant because he saw them as two sides of the same coin. This sentiment embodied the Wheel of Reform because it emphasized that the moral suasion of the people produced enduring political reform. Legislative action did not occur in a vacuum. Instead, Scott believed politics flowed from culture and religion. "Our national and State legislatures will abolish Slavery when the people shall generally call for it," he concluded, "and the people will call for it, when their convictions that it is a SIN are deep enough…."[78] Political action happened when politicians were pressured by a popular sentiment that was cultivated by intrepid moral leadership.

"Slavery. No. XIV," the next article in the series, turned to a common objection to this worldview: that slaves were unprepared for freedom. This article presented a straightforward

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[77] Scott, "Slavery. No. XIII. Immediate Emancipation.," 2.
[78] Scott, "Slavery. No. XIII. Immediate Emancipation.," 2.

argument that nevertheless offers greater clarity into Scott's belief in racial equality. In the same way that Scott had told Whedon and Fisk that colonization had created the racism that it claimed to solve, he argued that slavery created a self-perpetuating system which used its degradations of African Americans as a justification for slavery's continuation. He aptly called this "wrong by perpetuity having become right." Slavery, he complained, deprived slaves of education and used the consequences that came from that to maintain itself indefinitely. He succinctly encapsulated this reality, writing, "Slavery has made him *what* he is; and the slave laws doom him forever to remain as he is; and hence he is not prepared for freedom and never can be…." To Scott, the solution was simple. "Let them be emancipated as they are, and then let them be educated." When faced with objections that slaves could not care for themselves, he had an easy solution: "Free them and provide for them as other persons are provided for who are incapable of taking care of themselves." But Scott did not, however, feel that slaves needed to be coddled by charity. While he "admitted" that they may not be able to immediately become members of the "learned and lucrative professions," he believed they had the ability to "work, receive wages, and appropriate their earnings for the supply of their temporal wants."[79]

Racial equality – rooted in Scott's colorblind support for equal justice – rested at the foundation of this rebuttal to anti-abolitionism. "Men are men, whether white or black, ignorant or learned," he wrote, "and all men have certain 'inalienable rights,' which to take or withhold from them, except for crime, is the highest kind of robbery."[80] A person, irrespective of what he saw as superficial differences, owned their own body and soul, and could not be deprived of their rights. Invoking John Wesley's antislavery interpretation of the Golden Rule, Scott argued that if

[79] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XIV.," *Zion's Herald*, March 23, 1836, vol. 7, no. 12, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[80] Scott, "Slavery. No. XIV.," 2.

slavery and the consequences of the institution were wrong when inflicted upon whites then they were wrong when inflicted upon Blacks. Scott's vision of racial egalitarianism, derived from his Garrisonianism and his Wesleyanism, illustrated how immediate abolitionism, liberalism and republicanism, and evangelical Christianity could coexist in the same worldview. And that worldview was ultimately Scott's replacement for the slave system.

Scott further refined his critique of the suggestion that emancipated slaves could not care for themselves in "Slavery No. XV." His refutation of this "*northern*" proslavery argument assumed that the burden of proof rested with the anti-abolitionists. To Scott, they needed to affirmatively prove that slaves were unable to care for themselves and he declared that their assumptions went against the logic of slaveholders who were willing to invest in slaves and let those slaves care for them. "When and where have they been found unable or unwilling to take care of themselves?" he pressed before citing the free Blacks and fugitive slaves that he had become acquainted with in Massachusetts as anecdotal evidence. "They are all industrious and respectable," he said of them. Two secondhand examples, however, stand out as worthy of notice: a passing reference to Haiti and a lengthy exposition on the virtues of James G. Birney. In the case of Haiti, Scott argued that "even in St. Domingo" slaves "were both *able* and *willing* to take care of themselves." He then turned to Birney, a former slaveholder-turned-abolitionist, as an authority on the subject. Scott was effusive in his praise. Birney, under the influence of "abolition principles," rejected colonization and emancipated his slaves, hiring them as free laborers. Scott then provided readers with a lengthy quote from Birney that demonstrated that former slaves were diligent workers and willing to save their earnings. Birney further argued that he knew of only one former slave in Kentucky who had become a "pauper" – whom he described as "an old woman" – and added that he knew of no cases in which a freed slave had been

charged with criminal behavior. Expanding on Birney's line of argumentation, Scott concluded that poverty was a human problem, not a racial one. When adjusted for population per capita, he noted that "whites furnish as many paupers and miserable vagabonds … as the colored."[81] His colorblind brand of abolitionism and racial egalitarianism, then, also extended to his approach to questions of poverty and industriousness.

In "Slavery No. XVI," Scott continued to advance this argument about the work ethic of slaves but turned to the question of whether they *would* care for themselves. Once again citing Birney, Scott touted an anecdote about an emancipated slave becoming a better worker. With wages as an incentive, Birney had recalled to Scott, "he labored so hard, commenced so early in the morning, and continued so late in the evening, that I was obliged to go and tell him he must not do it…." In another case, Birney told Scott about a conversation he had with a tavern keeper who praised his Black neighbors as "industrious, contented, and happy." For Scott, Birney's evidence was irrefutable, and it pointed to an obvious solution to the question of what to do with emancipated slaves: "Let them remain *where they are* and be employed as free laborers." Scott, championing the idea of the Protestant work ethic and the ideals that would come to be known as free labor ideology, believed that free labor was inherently superior to slavery. All evidence, from Birney's accounts to emancipation in the West Indies, proved the principle that "liberty and wages are better motives to industry than the whip of the 'task master.'"[82]

In response to fears that emancipated slaves would "flood" the free states, Scott offered a rebuttal like the one he had used against colonization. Just as African Americans were Americans, Scott believed they were also southerners. "The South is their native land, to which

[81] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XV.," *Zion's Herald*, April 6, 1836, vol. 7, no. 14, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).
[82] O. Scott, "Slavery. No. XVI.," *Zion's Herald*, April 20, 1836, vol. 7, no. 16, no. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).

they are strongly attached," he wrote, adding that "They will not therefore be likely to emigrate to a cold climate – to a land of strangers, to seek employments which they are unaccustomed to, and where their labor is not wanted." The last of these four observations – "where their labor is not wanted" – is arguably the most significant. While such a statement could suggest Scott accepted the premise that more Blacks in the North would be a bad thing, that reading is inconsistent with the overarching argument of "Slavery No. XVI." Scott's assumption was that African Americans were an industrious people with a laudable work ethic. As a result, his view rested on the assumption that Blacks would not move to the North because they would go where jobs were available. This explains the assertion immediately afterwards: "There is a far greater probability, that many persons of color in the free states would emigrate to the South…." But ultimately, he concluded that where African Americans chose to live was immaterial. "Colored persons have the same right to any and all parts of the country that the whites have," he declared. He then offered a stinging rebuke of those who believed that people should be held in bondage indefinitely over fears of where they would live: "We ought to be ashamed of a sentiment so anti-Christian!"[83]

In early or mid-April, Scott and four other Methodists – Joseph A. Merrill, Phineas Crandall, Charles Virgin, and Daniel Fillmore – departed New England for Cincinnati. Rather than directly head there, they first traveled to New York City, arriving in the city by mid-April to attend the first anniversary of the New York Wesleyan Society.[84] During the meeting, intended to support the society's antislavery publication, the *Zion's Watchman*, Scott read the annual

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[83] Scott, "Slavery. No. XVI.," 2.
[84] "To the Delegates," *Zion's Herald*, March 2, 1836, vol. 7, no. 9, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022); One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, May 11, 1836, vol. 7, no. 19, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022). In March, Scott and his fellow New England delegates advertised their intention to leave for Cincinnati on April 18 and arrive in New York on April 20. However, they arrived earlier because Scott attended the New York Wesleyan Society on April 18.

report and delivered an address to the society. While in New York City, the New England, New Hampshire, and Maine Conferences united with many of their brethren from several other annual conferences. On April 19, the group of what Scott estimated to be forty or fifty delegates – approximately a third of the entire general conference – departed for Cincinnati, reaching Philadelphia on the twentieth and then traveling by railroad to Pittsburgh. After arriving in Pittsburgh on April 25 at 11 pm, the delegates traveled by steamboat down the Ohio River and reached Cincinnati on the afternoon of April 28. One noteworthy stop along the way came when the steamboat reached Point Pleasant, Virginia, and encountered a group of slaveholders transporting eighteen slaves further south. This scene, which "was received by abolitionists and anti-abolitionists, with *equal sentiments of horror*," culminated with Scott engaging the slaveholders in a conversation. Upon arriving in what one delegate called "the far-famed queen of the West," the delegates had four days until the start of proceedings.[85]

The journey to Cincinnati put the different factions within the Methodist Episcopal Church in close proximity for the first time since slavery had become an issue. Scott later recounted that the delegates engaged in "considerable discussion on the subject of slavery and abolition" but described this conversation as being "mostly a very pleasant and agreed character."[86] An anonymous delegate, corresponding to Benjamin Kingsbury so he could inform readers of the *Zion's Herald* of their movements, offered insight into this discussion. In his description, slavery and abolition were "discussed … nearly all the way from Philadelphia to Cincinnati."[87] In that correspondent's framing, two groups emerged as representative of the

[85] One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, May 11, 1836, vol. 7, no. 19, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022). Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 35-36; The numbers of this group are debatable, with an anonymous delegate informing the *Zion's Herald* that there were 35 delegates while Scott estimated in his autobiography there were between 40 or 50.
[86] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 35-36.
[87] One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," 2.

competing factions: Bishop James Osgood Andrew, Nathan Bangs, and Beverley Waugh of the New York Conference on one side with Scott, Merrill, George Storrs, John F. Adams, and Samuel Kelly leading the other faction. While traveling down the Ohio River, Scott, given his penchant for debate and his desire to engage the public, proposed opening their debates to others. In response to "a desire among the passengers to hear," the correspondent recalled that "brother Scott proposed … to collect the passengers in the gentlemen's cabin, appoint a chairman, and choose two on each side, and then speak so many minutes each."[88] Although the anti-abolition faction rejected Scott's proposal, the episode nevertheless reflected his desire for open debate.

The Cincinnati Conference proved to be a turning point for Orange Scott. Where his earlier debates had pitted him against colonizationists like Fisk and Whedon, men who had reservations about slavery, the general conference became an arena where Scott would confront Methodists who believed the system to be acceptable and, in some cases, even virtuous. As one delegate argued during the steamboat debates, "slavery was sanctioned by the gospel" and "there was no sin in slaveholding" because the institution was "an act of *mercy*."[89] Another delegate justified legal and extralegal violence against abolitionists and warned Scott that "right or wrong, with law or without it," the South would not allow "these fanatics [to] go unpunished...." Both views are significant because they rejected two central pillars of Scott's worldview: that slavery was a sin, and that mob violence and censorship were wrongs to be deprecated. If Whedon and Fisk had been mere impediments to abolitionism, then the delegates Scott met on the road to Cincinnati and during the General Conference embodied everything he opposed.[90]

[88] One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," 2.
[89] C. Sinclair, quoted in One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," 2.
[90] One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," 2. During Scott's trip to Cincinnati, he faced criticisms from anti-abolitionists in the *Zion's Herald*. H.D. criticized him again and another correspondent from Fairfax, Virginia, also launched a series designed to "explode" his arguments. Scott, however, did not reply to them. H.D., "[From a Southern Correspondent.]," *Zion's Herald*, April 27, 1836, vol. 7, no. 17, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 25, 2022); E. Sprague, "Letters to Rev. O. Scott," *Zion's Herald*, May 4, 1836, vol. 7, no. 18, p. 2,

What followed was what Scott called "a laborious and fatiguing session."[91] But it would also change his fate and that of his church, forever tethering their destinies to slavery. The clash would also become a defining chapter in Scott's life, if not *the* defining chapter, because it marked the first real cracks in the Methodist Episcopal Church that would manifest in the years that followed. The New England delegation, however, was composed of Scott, Joseph A. Merrill, Isaac Bonney, Daniel Fillmore, Phineas Crandall, Daniel Webb, and Charles Virgin. With Fillmore as the lone exception, they were all abolitionists. They were joined by a relatively sympathetic New Hampshire delegation that included Scott's old friend and co-laborer in his early years in the ministry, John F. Adams, as well as antislavery voices such as Jared Perkins, Schuyler Chamberlain, and Elisha J. Scott. George Storrs, the leading abolition Methodist voice in the conference, was also present.[92] While Storrs embodied the New Hampshire Conference's antislavery faction, Scott, as the New England delegate elected with the broadest support, emerged as a leading voice among his own conference's delegation. The Maine Conference, although not nearly as abolitionist as either New England or New Hampshire, included Charles Baker, Orange Scott's brother-in-law, among its delegates.[93]

The general conference was composed of the various annual conferences that together made up the Methodist Episcopal Church. In addition to the three New England conferences – New England, New Hampshire, and Maine – there were the New York conferences of New York, Troy, Oneida, and Genesee; the Pennsylvania conferences of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia;

ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022); E. Sprague, "Letters to Rev. O. Scott," *Zion's Herald*, May 11, 1836, vol. 7, no. 19, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 16, 2022).

[91] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 36.

[92] "Freedom of Speech in New Hampshire," *Zion's Herald*, April 13, 1836, vol. 7, no. 15, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 25, 2022).

[93] "The General Conference vs. O. Scott.," *Philanthropist*, May 27, 1836, vol. 1, no. 22, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). P. Crandall, "Delegates to the General Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, April 13, 1836, vol. 7, no. 15, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 25, 2022).

the northwestern conferences of Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana; and, most significantly, the slave state conferences of Baltimore, Virginia, Holston, South Carolina, Georgia, and Kentucky. In all, there were 154 delegates scheduled to attend. Respecting the issue of slavery, one correspondent for the Cincinnati antislavery newspaper, the *Philanthropist*, argued that the conference was composed of multiple factions that could be categorized as proslavery militants, proslavery moderates, "firm abolitionists," and non-interventionist anti-abolitionists. The first two groups came from the southern delegations, with the former seeking a confrontation over slavery and direct action in favor of slavery while the fourth group did not want any conference action. The abolitionists, which the correspondent estimated at twenty delegates, came from New England, New Hampshire, and Maine. The remaining delegates from the northern and northwestern conferences instead "seem to agree that slavery is a sin, but stagger at the thought of assailing it."[94] As the general conference revealed, while most moderate northern delegates sought to avoid a discussion altogether, they ultimately supported church action against abolitionism if they were forced to choose a side.

Business began on the morning of Monday, May 2, 1836. General conferences were overseen by bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and dealt with the church's institutional, ecclesiastical, and theological demands. Since Methodism was a connection of various annual conferences, the bishops facilitated inter-conference cooperation and provided institutional stability at the proceedings. Four bishops – Robert R. Roberts, Joshua Soule, Elijah Hedding, and James Osgood Andrew – opened the convention, with Roberts inaugurating their affairs with scriptural readings and opening prayer. The conference then conducted a roll call of all delegates present. After roll call, the morning session on the first day of the conference welcomed William

[94] Crandall, "Delegates to the General Conference.," 3. A Spectator, "For the Philanthropist.," *Philanthropist*, May 13, 1836, vol. 1, no. 20, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).

Case and William Lord, representatives from Canada and Great Britain respectively. The only other business attended to that morning before adjournment revolved around commemorations to deceased bishops John Emory and William M'Kendree. The afternoon session, which commenced at 3 pm, began with the formation of committees on episcopacy, itinerancy, conference boundaries, the Book Concern, education, and missions.[95]

The next morning at 8:30 am, Hedding opened the conference and oversaw committee assignments. These committees were composed of members from the different annual conferences and encompassed a diverse cross section of the national church. Most of the committees formed on the opening day of the conference were large, numbering over twenty members with usually at least one delegate from each conference. As a result, New England, New Hampshire, and Maine delegations went their separate ways. Charles Baker and Isaac Boney went to the committee on episcopacy while Jared Perkins and Daniel Webb were assigned to the committee on itinerancy. Joseph A. Merrill and Samuel Kelly joined the committee on the Book Concern. Orange Scott joined Samuel Norris on the committee on conference boundaries.[96] Phineas Crandall and Schuyler Chamberlain were named to a committee of expenses on May 4.

Much of the early conference business dealt strictly with the concerns of the Methodist Episcopal Church and its institutional health. Many letters and petitions, for example, addressed the fate of the Book Concern that had recently burned down.[97] Scott, however, took an early lead in the proceedings. On the morning of the second day, he made a motion that the committee on

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[95] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 24, 1836, vol. 10, no. 44, p. 174, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[96] "General Conference.," p. 174.
[97] "Dear Brother.," *Zion's Herald*, May 18, 1836, vol. 7, no. 20, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). This letter offers an interesting account of the fire in New York that left the Methodist Book Concern in ruins on the eve of the general conference.

itinerancy "be instructed to inquire into the administration of the Discipline in the several annual conferences, on the subject of finance."[98] This resolution echoed the concerns that Scott had voiced in the *Zion's Herald* about the church's ability to financially sustain its ministers. It also illustrates that while a battle over slavery loomed, Scott did not seek to turn the conference proceedings into a singular debate over slavery and abolition. While he believed slavery to be an important part of their business, it was still only part of their business.

This did not, however, mean that slavery played no role at the conference. The controversy, however, did not first come from the abolition Methodists of New England or New Hampshire. William Lord, the representative of the Wesleyan Methodists of Great Britain, delivered a speech on May 2 that briefly alluded to his denomination's report on slavery and he reminded the general conference that his branch of Methodism opposed slavery. It would be anti-abolitionist Stephen G. Roszell of the Baltimore Conference who invoked the word "slavery" for the first time in the official proceedings. Roszell soon became one of the central forces in the struggle against the New England and New Hampshire Conferences. He called for the creation of a committee on slavery, which he envisioned overseeing all papers, petitions, and memorials on the subject. The delegates initially laid Roszell's resolution on the table, and Scott, rather than embrace a debate, tried to return to other conference business. Nevertheless, slavery remained in the periphery, reemerging when Hedding read an address from the Wesleyan Methodist Conference that again referenced the peculiar institution. What to do with the address, especially given William Lord's presence, quickly became a topic of debate.

Nathan Bangs, the co-editor of the *Christian Advocate*, proposed forming a committee to respond to the letter. Scott, however, offered a counterproposal: he motioned for the address to

[98] "General Conference.," p. 174.

be published in the official organs of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a suggestion that produced "discussion" among delegates until Roszell resolved that they wait until Bangs' committee delivered a report on the address. William Capers of the South Carolina Conference, by contrast, suggested censoring the report of its mention to slavery if the document was to be published. That view failed to carry the day, but Capers won himself and his viewpoint a seat on the committee.[99] Hedding, agreeing with the need for a response committee, appointed Bangs, Capers, and Thomas A. Morris of the Ohio Conference to serve on it. With this "special" committee established, the conference adjourned until May 4 at 8:30 am.[100] Bishop Andrew, who presided that day, began his tenure by receiving memorials from the various annual conferences and referred most of them to the committee on boundaries.

During the May 4 session, Bangs motioned for the creation of a new committee which he termed "the Judiciary Committee." This committee, he envisioned, would serve to adjudicate "all appeals, or complaints of any character, against the acts and doings of an annual conference." In the interim, Bangs' special committee began drafting a response to William Lord and the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, which they presented to Bishop Roberts at the morning session on May 5. Their report included a response on slavery that took up two of its nine paragraphs. It began by professing to "receive with respectful deference" the words of their "elder brethren" but argued that the Wesleyans did not understand the issue of slavery. Slavery, they contended, could only be understood if one lived "in the midst of it" since it was a legal, political, and constitutional institution that existed "beyond the power of legislation … as well as the control of ecclesiastical bodies." After arguing that the Wesleyans should have limited their complaints to

[99] A Spectator, "For the Philanthropist.," *Philanthropist*, May 13, 1836, vol. 1, no. 20, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).
[100] "General Conference.," 174.

slavery itself rather than the Methodist ministry, the report boasted that the Methodist Episcopal Church had added over 70,000 slaves to the church's membership and established missions on plantations to promote further conversions. After its public reading before the general conference, Bangs motioned for the reply to be signed by the bishops and forwarded to Wilbur Fisk for presentation at the next Wesleyan conference in July.[101]

After the business with the Wesleyan Methodists was concluded, the conference turned toward receiving memorials and petitions from across the annual conferences as well as creating and staffing committees to respond to them. Most matters on May 5 and May 6 dealt with missions, temperance, and the Book Concern. The issue of slavery, however, returned on May 6 when Bangs unsuccessfully motioned for the general conference to authorize the publication of the address from the Wesleyan Methodist conference "together with our answer."[102]

The general conference resumed business on Monday, May 9 at 8:30 am with Andrew once again assuming the role as president. Delegates first tackled matters relating to Canada before turning to the Book Concern. Phineas Crandall, offering his first resolution at the conference, proposed setting up a book depository in Boston. Slavery, however, again emerged as a simmering issue that was finally beginning to boil. That day, Joseph A. Merrill offered an antislavery petition signed by 200 preachers calling for a restoration of older church rules against slavery. Merrill, supported by Orange Scott, motioned for the petition to be referred to a select committee on the subject. In a surprise move, Bangs endorsed the motion because it had become increasingly clear to him that the conference could not stifle discussion on the subject.[103] John

[101] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 1, 1836, vol. 10, no. 45, p. 177, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 26, 2022).
[102] "General Conference.," 177.
[103] "General Conference.," 177. A Spectator, "For the Philanthropist.," *Philanthropist*, May 13, 1835, vol. 1, no. 20, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).

Early, a proslavery delegate from the Virginia Conference and member of the militant proslavery faction, turned to address the conference by urging direct action. What followed was, in many respects, a warped version of Scott's Wheel of Reform.

In Early's view, only the Methodist Episcopal Church could save the Union. He agreed with Scott that society was composed of various institutions and that religious organizations played an integral role in the cultivation of morality and social cohesion. He further shared Scott's view that the Christian denominations together made up the institution of church in society and he believed these bodies were the connective tissue of the Union. To him, however, only the Methodists could effectively unite the country because the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Baptists were too divided on a host of issues from baptism to slavery. It fell on them to become the vanguard of societal change. But where Scott believed the churches should lead by preaching the sinfulness of slavery, Early adopted the opposite view. He believed the church should condemn abolitionism. Early, according to one eyewitness, said, "Let abolitionism be denounced by her [the church], from Maine to Illinois, and it would place her on a commanding eminence that she had never yet enjoyed."[104]

The following day, on May 10, the issue of slavery again began to creep into the general conference in a far greater capacity. After listening to a report from the committee on the Book Concern, Robert Roberts, chairing the conference that day, announced the creation of a "committee on the address from the New-England and New-Hampshire conferences on the subject of slavery." This committee was composed of John Davis of the Baltimore Conference, Joseph A. Merrill of New England, John F. Adams of New Hampshire, William A. Smith of Virginia, Lovick Pierce of the Georgia Conference, David Daily of the Philadelphia Conference,

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[104] A Spectator, "For the Philanthropist.," 2.

and G.S. Holmes. With only two delegates that could be considered antislavery, Roberts had formed a decidedly anti-abolitionist committee. He then tapped Bangs, Capers, and Morris – the authors of the reply to the Wesleyan Methodists – to draft a pastoral address.[105]

On May 11, Stephen G. Roszel interrupted the business of the day, mostly confined to the Book Concern, with a resolution on Bangs' pastoral address committee. His resolution urged Bangs, Capers, and Morris to include language that "instructed" preachers and members of the church "to take notice of the subject of modern abolition" and "let our preachers, members, and friends know that the General Conference are opposed to the agitation of that subject, and will use all prudent means to put it down."[106] Once again, however, Roszel's motion was laid on the table. William Winans, a delegate from Mississippi, followed the defeat by calling for a recess until after public services had been concluded. The issue of slavery, however, would not be broached again on May 11 since services honoring deceased bishops William M'Kendree and John Emory took up the remainder of the day. Roszel, however, resumed his push the next day and motioned for a condemnation of two members of the church who had lectured on abolitionism during their stay in Cincinnati: Storrs and Norris. Roszel, who had made no secret of his intentions to force the issue of slavery, finally succeeded. The official proceedings of the convention described what followed on the May 12 morning session as "considerable excitement and discussion until the time of adjournment had arrived." When the conference reconvened at 3 pm, they once again picked up Roszel's resolution. James Osgood Andrew, presiding over this afternoon session, supervised the debate. Loring Grant of the Genesee Conference offered an amendment to Roszel's preamble and resolution that became the subject of discussion for the

[105] "General Conference.," 177.
[106] "General Conference.," 177.

remainder of the session. After Grant's resolution failed, the discussion returned to Roszel's motion but was ultimately cut short with a call to adjourn for the evening.[107]

The next session of the conference began at 8 am on Friday, May 13. The issue of slavery immediately became the focal point of the general conference with John Early proposing a resolution that declared that "the regular course of business was dispensed with" and that they would take up the "unfinished business of yesterday." Roszel immediately followed Early by motioning for a resumed discussion of his preamble and resolutions. After debating the issue for an hour, the conference adjourned until 3 pm. That afternoon, they immediately resumed the discussion on Roszel's motion. His preamble and resolutions read:

> Whereas great excitement has pervaded this country on the subject of modern abolitionism, which is reported to have been increased in this city recently by the unjustifiable conduct of two members of the General Conference … and whereas such a course on the part of any of its members is calculated to bring upon this body the suspicions and distrust of the community, and misrepresent its sentiments in regard to the point at issue; and whereas in this aspect, a due regard for its own character … demand a full, decided, and unequivocal expression of the views of the General Conference, in the premises. Therefore, 1st, resolved, by the delegates of the annual conferences…that they disapprove in the most unqualified sense, the conduct of two members of the General Conference, who are reported to have lectured in this city recently upon and in favor of modern abolitionism. 2d, Resolved … that they [the delegates] are decidedly opposed to modern abolitionism, and wholly disclaim any right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relations between master and slave, as it exists in the slaveholding states of this Union. 3d, Resolved … that the foregoing preamble and resolutions be published in our periodicals.[108]

These resolutions not only abrogated what abolition Methodists viewed as their religious and moral obligation; they proclaimed the opposite. They established the principle that a Methodist

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[107] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 8, 1836, vol. 10, no. 46, p. 181, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).

[108] "General Conference.," 181. "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). Birney identified George Storrs and Samuel Norris as the two delegates targeted by Roszel because they had addressed the Cincinnati Anti-Slavery Society.

could not be an abolitionist. After a contentious debate, Roberts called for a vote on the first resolution over the two lecturers, which was carried 122-11. When he next called for a vote on Roszel's second resolution condemning modern abolitionism and reaffirming slavery in slave states, Orange Scott rose to propose an amendment. This amendment, which sought to balance the conference's condemnation of "modern abolitionism" with an equal denunciation of slavery as a sin, was defeated 123-14.[109] The resolution was then subsequently divided between the abolition clause and the slave state clause, with the former winning 120-14 and the latter being carried unanimously. After the second resolution passed, the third resolution was carried with no opposition and the conference adjourned until May 14.[110]

The fourteen delegates who voted in favor of Scott's amendment and voted against the first part of the second resolution on modern abolitionism were celebrated by abolitionists across the free states. The "Cincinnati Fourteen," as they came to be called, included most delegates from New England and New Hampshire: Orange Scott, Isaac Bonny, Joseph A. Merrill, Charles Virgin, Phineas Crandall, John F. Adams, Jared Perkins, Charles D. Cahoon, Elihu Scott, Samuel Kelly, Elisha J. Scott, Samuel Norris, Schuyler Chamberlin, and George Storrs. While their stance came to be seen by abolitionists inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church as a heroic resistance against Methodism's institutional and moral corruption, Orange Scott became the face of the opposition.

While the official proceedings of the Cincinnati Conference offered few specifics of what transpired on May 12-13, James G. Birney's *Philanthropist* offered readers a clearer portrait.

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[109] "General Conference.," 181. One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, May 25, 1836, vol. 7, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). The exact text of Scott's proposed amendment would have included the phrase "we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery, we disapprove in the most unqualified terms of modern abolitionism."
[110] "General Conference.," 181.

Birney explained to his readers that he offered "a sketch of the debate" which, although "imperfect," preserved "the facts and arguments that were advanced."[111] Under the broad section in the newspaper of "Pro-Slavery Ecclesiastics," Birney debuted a four-part series of his firsthand accounts of the general conference. His narrative highlighted the significant role that Scott played in the proceedings, and ultimately promoted him to a much wider audience.

During the May 12 debate over Roszel's resolutions, one of the issues the delegates discussed was the exact language to be used in the censure of George Storrs and Samuel Norris for their participation at the Cincinnati Anti-Slavery Society. In particular, the *Philanthropist* reported that Matthew Sorin of the Philadelphia Conference and William A. Smith of the Virginia Conference supported publicly exposing their identities to the public. Smith especially emerged as one of the most vocal and aggressive among the proslavery militants and, in the case of Storrs and Norris, "strenuously" supported a public humiliation of them because of "the length and breadth of their DAMNING INIQUITY."[112] His brand of proslavery sentiment, however, was a minority position and the Smith-Sorin amendment to name Storrs and Norris failed. The general conference, nevertheless, supported a public condemnation of the two ministers. This further reveals the nature of anti-abolitionism within the general conference. Northern anti-abolition moderates viewed proslavery militants with some reservation but, when forced to choose between them and the abolitionists, consistently sided with the supporters of slavery.

The Roszel resolutions enjoyed widespread support from across the general conference with most criticisms stemming from a belief that Roszel had not gone far enough in his denunciations of the abolitionists. Roszel, however, did not see his resolutions as being moderate

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[111] "Debate on Slavery and Abolition.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).
[112] "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).

or conciliatory. When Loring Grant, a delegate from the Genesee Conference, expressed concerns that both the proslavery faction and the abolitionists shared blame, Roszel countered with a belief that the general conference needed to wield its institutional might against abolitionism alone. Likening abolitionists to people who disrupted camp meetings, Roszel dismissed those who would use "*butter and honey*" or "*milk and water*" against abolitionists. Because abolitionists were convinced "they were doing God's service," he argued that it was necessary for the general conference and the public "to reprobate what they had done, and what they were doing, in the strongest terms." He was largely unconcerned with identifying specific abolitionists; he was more interested in discrediting abolitionism as a movement. Echoing Early's earlier remarks, Roszel called on the general conference, as an institution, to "come out" and "speak out boldly in opposition to abolition," which he concluded would elevate Methodism so that "no church would occupy a higher place in Christendom than she."[113]

The most noteworthy character of this debate, as depicted by the *Philanthropist* and the *Zion's Herald*, was that the initial debate on slavery over the Roszel resolutions was a debate between anti-abolitionists and proslavery militants. Nearly everyone agreed with condemning abolitionism; they only differed with respect to degree. "About four hours had now been occupied by anti-abolitionists and slaveholders," a correspondent to the *Zion's Herald* fumed, adding that the delegates were preparing to vote without hearing from a single abolitionist. In that moment, at five o'clock in the afternoon of May 12, Orange Scott rose to deliver a rebuttal. Scott, however, opened his speech by asserting that abolition Methodists had the "right" to provide "a full view of the[ir] doctrines and measures" before the general conference chose to condemn them. Anti-abolition and proslavery delegates, however, decried Scott as being out of

[113] "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.

order, with Birney reporting that there were at least four efforts to stop him. Andrew, the presiding bishop, sided with Scott in each case and allowed him to continue his speech. Scott's overall remarks promoted the worldview which he had articulated in *Zion's Herald* and across the New England Conference that could be summarized as "an attempt to show, that the *principle* of slavery is a bad principle, under *all circumstances* and in *all hands*." Birney was effusive of Scott's remarks, observing that "We cannot fail to express our admiration of the coolness and self-possession of Mr. Scott."[114] Since Scott was still speaking when the general conference adjourned, he retained the floor the next day.

On the morning of May 13, Scott resumed his speech and spoke for about two hours. In this portion of the speech, Scott emphasized the antislavery foundations of Methodism and specifically cited two of its greatest figures: John Wesley and Richard Watson.[115] While he echoed much of his earlier writing, his remarks proved significant because he now brought them before a general conference. Most notably, he introduced his fellow delegates, north and south, to his Wheel of Reform. His views differed from the anti-abolitionist factions who wanted to maintain a separation of religious and political institutions. According to Scott, the two could not be divided. "The sentiment which our General Conference expresses," he declared, "will either retard or hasten the deliverance of the slaves. Great, therefore, is our responsibility!" While Scott did not believe ministers should engage in partisan politics, he believed that political questions could not be separated from morality since politics, law, and moral principle were intertwined. Slavery, then, was not simply an issue for the politicians; it was something that concerned

[114] One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, May 25, 1836, vol. 7, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).
[115] One of the Delegates, "General Conference.," 3. "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). Both sources state that Scott spoke for two hours in the morning session.

"ministers and Christians." Although ministers did not possess the power or authority to abolish slavery in the slave states, they had the power to condemn the principles which had made slavery possible, profitable, and powerful. "The subject of slavery involves GREAT MORAL PRINCIPLES," he concluded, "and with these, as christian ministers, we have something to do."[116] While one delegate criticized Scott for looking at the "abstract" at the expense of "reality," the phrase "great moral principles" became a rallying cry for Scott because he believed that principles shaped reality.

In that sense, Scott promulgated the view that slavery only existed because of the principle of the right to property in man. This underscores Scott's continued belief in moral absolutes since he argued that it was "evil, ONLY EVIL, and that CONTINUALLY!" regardless of its "circumstances." Policy, then, inevitably flowed from principle. And if a principle was evil, then its real-world manifestations were evil in *all* instances. But where many anti-abolitionists that Scott had debated felt that slavery's morality was dependent on circumstances, Scott countered with a belief that slavery must either be good or evil because the principle which sustained it was either good or evil. If the right to property in man was a moral good, he reasoned, then it meant that slavery was "universally right."[117]

Once again, Scott stood on the shoulders of his Methodist predecessors and therefore presented a restorative rather than innovative argument against slavery. By turning to John Wesley, Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, and the early Methodist Discipline, Scott made the case

[116] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by the Rev. O. Scott, A Member of That Body; Presented During its Session in Cincinnati, Ohio, May 19, 1836. To Which is Added The Speech of the Rev. Mr. Scott, Delivered on the Floor of the General Conference, May 27, 1836* (New York: H.R. Piercy, Printer, 1836), Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed August 26, 2022), 2-3, 7.
[117] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 4-5**.**

that modern abolitionism was pure, unvarnished Methodism.[118] But Scott, who promoted a view of the American Church as the union of all Christian denominations, also paid respect to the Presbyterians through the Kentucky Synod, which had also condemned slavery.[119] With this foundation established, he turned once again to the familiar questions of "excitement" and consequences. These subjects allowed Scott to further tether his Wheel of Reform and its framework for moral betterment to the historical past. Reforms, in Scott's worldview, began with bold action from religious and moral authorities. Citing Moses and Aaron beseeching Pharoah for freedom, the Founding Fathers fighting against the British, Martin Luther promoting religious reform, and the temperance movement resisting the prevailing culture, Scott argued that any movement that promoted "so great a change" would inevitably produce "great excitement." He further linked excitement with public opinion, arguing that moral reform should be pursued regardless of the difficulties it imposed on the reformer. Adversity did not change the underlying morality. He declared:

> Public opinion was against Daniel, when he was commanded not to pray for thirty days, but braved it…. Public opinion was against the three Hebrews, when they refused to worship the 'golden image,' and to obey laws which infringed upon the rights of conscience…. The apostles braved public opinion in every place where they planted their standard of the cross. Martin Luther and his followers did the same at the risk of their lives! John Wesley and his coadjutors in England, braved public opinion…And though public opinion commanded Mr. Wesley to desist through the medium of mobs – still he stood it out! Shame on his compromising *sons*!...But now comes up the new doctrine of *compromise*!! Let it be banished from the breast of every patriot, philanthropist, and Christian. The advocates of temperance have braved and changed public opinion. The same may be said of Wilberforce, and the English Abolitionists. – And with all these examples before us, shall we succumb to an unholy public opinion, founded in a love of

[118] Scott selected several quotes from Wesley, Clarke, and Watson. The Wesley excerpt invoked the "man-stealers" rhetoric in all but name, Clarke called slavery "a CRIME for which perdition has scarcely an adequate state of punishment," and Watson equated the "wrong" of the slave trade with slaveholding itself.
[119] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 4-7**.** Scott praised the authors of the address from the Kentucky Synod because it came from residents of a slave state. He argued the address "should put the ministers and Christians of the free states to the blush of shame!"

> gain? Shall we turn our backs upon the cause of suffering humanity because public opinion frowns upon us? No! NEVER.[120]

This excerpt illustrates the Wheel of Reform in action. Public opinion, when wrong, was to be challenged so that it could be reformed. Social reformation, then, begat political reformation. But the process could only occur if ministers braved public opinion, mobs, and potential consequences.

Although the Roszel resolutions ultimately passed with overwhelming support, Scott's speech marked a tectonic shift in the debate. Prior to Scott's entry, the anti-abolition and proslavery factions had pursued an offensive course, attacking abolitionists and abolitionism. His address, however, inverted the debate and forced the delegates to adopt a more explicit defense of slavery. Nathan Bangs was aware of this rhetorical strategy, and, once Scott finished speaking, reminded delegates that abolitionism, not slavery, was the issue being debated. Despite Bangs' best efforts, Scott's speech prompted an almost reflexive defense of the peculiar institution by the proslavery militants.[121] In doing so, Scott exposed the defenders of slavery and what they truly believed before the entirety of the general conference and, by proxy, the entire connection. If the anti-abolitionists were going to side with proslavery militants, then they would see for themselves the people and the institution they were defending.[122]

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[120] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 7-9.

[121] "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). Bangs was one of the leading voices trying to silence Scott during his speech.

[122] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 9. In Scott's speech, he argued that the general conference could not defeat abolitionism. Regardless of whether they passed Roszel's resolutions, he argued that abolitionism would gain "strength and stability." He pressed further against anti-abolitionism in the free states: "these are the men who are to sit as our judges – men who, in point of examination, and a knowledge of what they condemn, have not so much as touched it with their tongues – and yet they are prepared to express their 'unqualified' disapprobation of that of which they acknowledge their entire ignorance! O, how strangely have we departed from the footsteps of our fathers!" His goal, then, was to force people to confront the reality of their actions by making the debate about slavery and its principles.

After Scott took his seat, Thomas Crowder of the Virginia Conference immediately rose to outline what he sarcastically termed the "difficulties" that ultimately "forbade the occupying of the ground taken by Mr. Scott."[123] Crowder's "difficulties" with abolitionism stemmed from his scriptural, historical, and political beliefs. He was unambiguous in his support of slavery as an institution ordained by the Bible, vindicated by history, and necessary for the preservation of the Union. But Crowder's speech also illustrated that Scott had clearly unsettled the proslavery militants because their responses tended to be of an emotional and often *ad hominem* character. Admitting that he was a slaveholder, Crowder reportedly likened the dress of his cook with the wives of northern ministers.[124] William Winans of the Mississippi Conference, who followed Crowder, further illustrated the ways in which Scott's effort to turn the debate over abolitionism into a divisive apology for slavery had succeeded. Winans announced to Roberts that he no longer wished to limit his speech to the Roszel resolutions because he wanted to "reply directly to brother Scott's argument."[125] His reply went further than defending slavery. While Winans concurred with his northern anti-abolition allies that slavery was "a political question," his remarks are significant because his defense ultimately rested on a moral foundation. Slavery, he reasoned, was not a mere political issue; it could be a positive moral good when checked by religion. He did not simply want more slaveholders. He wanted more Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist slaveholders; more slaveholding deacons, presiding elders, and bishops.

Other speakers, including Roszel and William Capers, closed the morning session by trying to temper the proslavery rhetoric from Crowder and Winans, but Scott's speech had

[123] Thomas Crowder, quoted in "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.
[124] Crowder reportedly said this during the Friday session. It came up in the Saturday morning session of the *Philanthropist* article because Crowder rose on Saturday to offer a qualified apology. He did not retract his response. Instead, he said he had not intended offense and suggested he would be willing to put his own wife alongside the wives of northern ministers.
[125] "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.

nevertheless forced anti-abolition delegates to confront the reality of slavery and the proslavery argument that they had chosen to defend. For Scott, only through the force of argument could moral issues be won or lost. Moreover, his speech and the hostile reaction it received linked the fates of slavery and abolition together. When Scott revived his amendment to have the conference acknowledge slavery as a sin during the afternoon session, he faced challenges from Winans and the other militants. If the church needed to protect itself from abolitionism, then it equally needed to guard itself against the influence of slavery. But his speech also further cemented the connection between slavery and abolition by portraying them as natural antagonists.[126]

During the debate over the Scott amendment, William A. Smith of the Virginia Conference rose to deliver his own rebuttal. Smith, who introduced himself as a man, a Christian, and a gentleman, prefaced his remarks by assuring the delegates that he did not hate the abolition Methodists. But like his fellow Virginian John Early, Smith's speech underscored the fundamental, irreconcilable differences between abolition and proslavery Methodism. These differences ultimately revolved around a disagreement over morality. Where anti-abolition Methodists saw slavery as having no moral character, or a moral character that depended on circumstance, abolition and proslavery Methodists saw slavery as an intractable moral issue. Smith, therefore, objected to Methodists that classified slavery as a sin and claimed that such a view suggested that slaveholders could not be Christians. For Smith, this was the "consummate folly" of abolitionism because it "ride[s] over our feelings."[127] His invocation of feelings, however, is an important element to the proslavery persuasion, especially as it emerged within the Methodist Episcopal Church. For all the bluster of Scripture, history, or politics as well as the

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[126] "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.
[127] William A. Smith, quoted in "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.

elaborate frameworks its proponents had constructed to justify slavery, the argument ultimately devolved into an emotive and sentimental defense of the status quo when confronted. Crowder, Winans, and Smith all resorted to such polemics when challenged by a single antislavery speech.

Smith's remarks were especially laced with emotion because they were defensive by their very nature. He was vindicating himself and his fellow southerners from those who sought to "unchristianize them." Scott, suspecting that the remark referenced him, rose to insist he had been misrepresented. In a reply that left many stunned, Smith turned to Scott and reportedly responded, "I have no more to do with that brother, than if he did not exist" before adding "I wish to *God*, he were in heaven."[128] The comment, whether intentional or not, was interpreted by Scott and his supporters inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church as a threat. Bishop Roberts seemingly agreed and intervened to get clarification from Smith, who justified his comment in emotional terms. His words were permissible, he contended, because Scott had described slaveholders and their supporters as man-stealers. Although he conceded that Scott was a "sincere" person, he nevertheless argued that Scott, by embracing "modern abolitionism" was committing "a great political and religious heresy."[129] Smith peppered his argument with invectives against abolitionists who had deigned to consider slavery to be a sin. His use of heresy is especially illustrative because he, like Early, championed a proslavery reflection of Scott's worldview. Where Scott believed slavery to be a sin incompatible with Christianity, Smith believed abolitionism to be a heresy incompatible with their faith. His qualifier in relation to the charge of heresy – "political and religious" – further suggests that Smith, like Scott, saw slavery as having moral and political dimensions.

[128] William A. Smith, quoted in "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.
[129] "General Conference – Methodist Episcopal Church. Discussion of Slavery.," 2.

Like Crowder during the morning session, Smith therefore invoked a recurring duality among proslavery militants. Slavery was at once a political institution beyond the reach of religious authorities while also being a positive good sanctioned by the Bible. When pressed by Scott, they ultimately turned to the latter. Both abolition Methodists and proslavery militants could therefore at least agree that slavery had *some* moral character even if they ultimately disagreed in their conclusions. They each believed slavery had moral and political elements but held diametrically opposing views about what that meant and what it entailed for them as ministers. For Scott, it meant wielding their moral power as ministers to change public opinion through the Wheel of Reform. For Crowder, Winans, and Smith, it meant wielding church power to protect slavery and keep it beyond the reach of church and state.

The debate of May 12-13 over the issue of slavery, inaugurated by Roszel's anti-abolition resolutions and sustained by Scott's antislavery speech, represented a major flashpoint for the general conference. It further cemented Scott's role as an antislavery leader because he was the abolition Methodist who stood and spoke for several hours in front of the general conference about slavery. In doing so, he forced the entire church to confront that issue and its moral implications. Instead of allowing the delegates to simply condemn abolitionism, he forced them to affirm slavery by their silence. He further drew the connection between slavery and abolition so that church authorities could no longer effectively separate the two into distinct, unrelated issues. Censure and forced silence became the only solutions available to them. As such, they purged the entire abolition discussion from their official proceedings, captured only by the pen of Orange Scott and other sympathetic eyewitnesses. And when James Birney offered to distribute his own transcript of the debate among the delegates at his own expense, the general conference offered what he called the "very unsuitable response" of immediately laying it on the table.

Simultaneously, a pamphlet containing Scott's speech and a sketch of the ensuing debate began to make its way across Cincinnati on May 19.[130]

May 14's morning session initially turned to other subjects, with the general conference hearing an address from the American Temperance Society and the report of the committees on episcopacy, Canada, temperance, and the allowance of preachers. With the reports delivered, Scott returned to the issue of slavery and presented a petition from people in the New England Conference, which was subsequently assigned to the slavery committee. In response to Scott's petition, Nathan Bangs rose and motioned that "no memorial should be received unless subscribed by the memorialists in their own proper signatures." The general conference then debated the language of that resolution, but it was ultimately defeated. Although Bangs withdrew the motion, Roszel immediately tried to revive it, but his resolution met the same fate.[131]

The general conference turned to other business for the remainder of the day and reconvened on the morning of May 16 at 8 am. During that session, the New Hampshire Conference, led by John F. Adams, presented its own antislavery petition. Like the New England Conference's petition, it was referred to the committee on slavery.[132] But in the case of petitions, New England and New Hampshire did not stand alone. They were joined by petitions from the Troy and Oneida Conferences. This did not mean the day was consumed with talk of slavery and antislavery petitions. The general conference debated several other issues that played an even greater role in the proceedings: the passing of John Emory, affairs related to Canada, marriage,

[130] "Offer to the M.E. Conference – Rejected.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).
[131] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 8, 1836, vol. 10, no. 46, p. 181, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).
[132] For the text of this memorial, see "Anti-Slavery Memorial.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022).

and even the propriety of including the word "catholic" in the Discipline.[133] Slavery, however, still loomed because it touched on so many other questions and considerations from missionary work to the very right of annual conferences to deliver petitions to the larger church community. The latter of these became an especially important fixture of the debate on slavery in the years that would follow. Abolition Methodists embraced the petition as a tool to promote abolitionism, and the church's increasingly heavy-handed response against petitions helped connect the struggle over slavery with questions of conference rights, lay rights, and the power of bishops.[134]

In response to the antislavery petitions, Winans proposed that they place a deadline on petitions, memorials, or appeals. While his suggestion did not necessarily appear proslavery on the surface – petitions had been delivered to the conference on a variety of subjects – the timing of his motion suggests a connection with slavery. In the span of two days before Winans's motion, the general conference had received six antislavery petitions across four annual conferences. Nevertheless, this did not have its intended effect, as the general conference received six more antislavery memorials from circuits in Maine and another one from the New Hampshire Conference on the morning session of May 17. Like the earlier antislavery petitions, these memorials were referred to the committee on slavery. Missionary discussions, especially those related to Canada, became an increasingly important fixture of the conference on May 16 and 17 and dominated the afternoon sessions of both days.[135]

Due to John Emory's funeral on May 18, the conference did not resume until Thursday, May 19 at 3 pm. After a shortened afternoon session, the conference returned to its ordinary schedule of meeting at 8 am the next day and inaugurated its business by hearing from the

[133] Allen Wiley of the Indiana Conference proposed altering the marriage ceremony so that bride and groom did not need to repeat after the minister. He also proposed replacing the phrase "man and wife" with "husband and wife."
[134] "General Conference.," 181.
[135] "General Conference.," 181.

judiciary committee, chaired by David Young of the Ohio Conference. Young offered the committee's report on a petition it had received from twenty Methodists on the Lancaster circuit in the Baltimore Conference. This petition, described as "an able document" characterized by "the most respectful language," urged the general conference to "revise" the Methodist Discipline's requirement that individuals with an official station in the church emancipate any slaves in their possession. Arguing that this rule went against the laws of states like Virginia, the petitioners complained that they should receive an exemption. If the general conference refused to acquiesce to their demands, the petitioners threatened to withdraw from the Baltimore Conference and join the Virginia Conference.[136]

The judiciary committee was torn since the complaint touched on matters beyond slavery. They supported the right of the annual conference to dictate its affairs but were sympathetic to the plight of the slaveholders. "Your committee view this subject in a different light," they replied before clarifying that they only based their decision on a belief that "a conference must have the right to act freely." Annual conferences had the right to, in the words of the committee's report, "determine its own course, and vote freely…." Nevertheless, Young and his committee ultimately sided with the petitioners. He concluded that, while the Baltimore Conference had acted appropriately, the general conference should nevertheless modify the Discipline to carve out a slaveholding exemption for the petitioners.[137] Their underlying validation of annual conferences would play an important role in the debates that followed. In a church that was overwhelmingly anti-abolitionist, a belief in the individual autonomy of annual conferences

[136] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 29, 1836, vol. 10, no. 49, p. 193, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).
[137] "General Conference.," 193.

became a cornerstone of an abolition Methodism that was increasingly forced to assume a more defensive posture.

The general conference, however, did not implement Young's recommended modification of the Discipline and instead turned to financial considerations. William H. Capers of the South Carolina Conference delivered the report for the committee on expenses, John Early called for the general conference to hear the report from the committee on conference boundaries that would outline the borders of the various annual conferences the next four years. This committee, of which Scott was a member, had its report carried without much dissension. With discussion concluded and the report carried, the general conference adjourned until 3 pm and then turned to the report from the committee on episcopacy. This report, presented by Early, proposed that bishops should rotate ministers more frequently and suggested two years as an ideal point for bishops to make changes.[138] Of most immediate concern, however, was Early's resolution calling for the general conference "to strengthen the episcopacy" and his proposal to elect and ordain three new bishops to achieve that end. After reading his report, Early promoted the measure as necessary to help Bishop Joshua Soule recover his health and relieve other existing bishops of their workloads. Winans immediately backed Early's measure and made the exact same argument for Bishop Roberts.[139] A minister from the Baltimore Conference proposed a resolution with unanimous support that made the same case for Hedding.[140] The general

[138] The choice of two years is an interesting suggestion, given what would happen in the following months. That year marked Orange Scott's second year as presiding elder of Providence District, and Early's resolution mentioned that elders should be changed after two years.
[139] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 29, 1836, vol. 10, no. 49, p. 193-194, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).
[140] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 5, 1836, vol. 10, no. 50, p. 197, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).

conference did not act that day, but the question of strengthening and empowering the episcopal hierarchy – the objective of Early and Winans – had broad support.[141]

Although seemingly disconnected from the issue of slavery, questions of church government – the power of bishops, the autonomy of the annual conferences, and the means to regulate church teaching among members through the Discipline – remained deeply connected with the South's peculiar institution. After 1836, these questions would become increasingly paramount considerations for abolition Methodists and their critics. If slavery was right or wrong, or if abolitionism was an evil that threatened the church, then it stood to reason that the church needed to wield its power to promote the correct view. The consequences of this power struggle from 1836 through 1842 would have a lasting impact on American Methodism.

The conference began the morning session on May 21 with reports from the committees on the Book Concern and education before turning to the committee on slavery. John Davis of the Baltimore Conference, the chairman of the committee on slavery, offered a curt reply to the antislavery petitions and memorials he had received. Davis' reply, far shorter and less generous than Young's sympathetic response to the Lancaster circuit petitioners, dismissed the petitions since it "would be highly improper" to "take any action or change our rules on the subject of slavery." But Davis did not stop there. He further resolved that "we deem it improper further to agitate the subject in the General Conference at present." After voting to approve Schuyler Chamberlain's proposed extension of the conference from May 26 to May 30, the session concluded with a debate on whether to restore John Wesley's initial temperance rules.[142]

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[141] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 29, 1836, vol. 10, no. 49, p. 193, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).
[142] "General Conference.," 193. The New England Conference, which had called for a return to Wesley's original rule of temperance, suggested doing the for slavery. Both were framed as a restoration of the old rather than a novel policy. But the general conference only treated the former issue with seriousness, stifling discussion of the latter.

The next major development at the conference came on Thursday, May 24 with elections for various editorial, missionary, and ecclesiastical positions within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Under Bishop Andrew's guidance, delegates approved the episcopal committee's proposal for new bishops and voted to determine the three bishops. With 153 eligible voters, the first ballot ended with Beverly Waugh of the New York Conference receiving 85 votes and Wilbur Fisk garnering 78. Since bishops needed a majority, the process continued until a third candidate could garner at least 77 votes. Ultimately, Thomas Morris of the Ohio Conference was elected to the final position with 86 votes on the sixth ballot. The conference then filled other positions: Nathan Bangs was elected resident missionary secretary with over 61% of the vote on the first ballot, Samuel Luckey of the Genesee Conference received 83 votes on the second ballot to become the next principal editor of the *Christian Advocate*, and John A. Collins was also chosen to be Luckey's assistant editor on the second ballot.[143]

The election of the bishops, however, was the most essential of these developments. Given southern interest in electing a slaveholding bishop, the move had been part of an unsuccessful power play to affirm slavery inside the church. Nevertheless, the anti-abolition triumph reflected a shared interest between northern moderates and proslavery southerners in strengthening the episcopacy and potentially employing its power against annual conferences that were seen as sympathetic to abolitionism. Roberts, Soule, Andrew, and Hedding were all anti-abolitionists, and two of the three newly elected bishops – Waugh and Fisk – shared those views. Although Fisk warranted the position on merit, his election nevertheless signified that the national church overwhelmingly favored his brand of New England Methodism over Orange

[143] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 5, 1836, vol. 10, no. 50, p. 197, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).

Scott's. Moreover, choosing as bishop the man who had withdrawn from the New England delegation also represented a not-so-subtle rebuke of the New England Conference.

After the elections were concluded, Winans and Kentucky delegate Jonathan Stamper, proposed a joint resolution to address what had become a major issue: the emergence of a mysterious pamphlet entitled "Address to the General Conference of the M.E. Church, by a Member of that Body," which had begun circulating inside and outside the general conference beginning on May 19. The pamphlet, which included Orange Scott's speech from May 12-13 and the debate over the Roszel resolutions, had even made its way into the *Philanthropist*. The Winans-Stamper resolution, which proclaimed the pamphlet to be a "palpably false" discussion of "modern abolitionism," excoriated the work as being "calculated to make an impression to the injury of the character of some of the members...."[144]

But just as the delegates were prepared to lay the resolution on the table until the following day, Orange Scott rose and identified himself as the author of the pamphlet. Because of the severity of the charges leveled against him – including allegations of falsehood – Scott requested time to prepare a speech. He only asked for a copy of the resolution as well as the speech Winans had made in favor of it. The conference acceded to Scott's request that he have time to prepare his defense, but Winans refused to hand over his speech because he did not believe Scott could be trusted with it. Nathan Bangs, by contrast, used the pamphlet as an opportunity to call for greater censorship of the conference. Targeting the *Philanthropist* because of its exhaustive notetaking, he argued that no papers should be allowed to publish the proceedings of the general conference without receiving permission. His proposal did not succeed, but his conduct was illustrative of an emerging culture of censorship among anti-

[144] "General Conference.," 197.

abolition Methodists who were so fearful of proslavery militants that they believed only enforced silence could preserve church and state.[145] After determining that Scott would speak the following day, the conference adjourned.[146] Once he was given the floor on the morning of May 25, Scott delivered "a speech of considerable length" and Winans followed with his own remarks. After both men spoke, the general conference adjourned until the afternoon.[147]

The Winans-Stamper resolution became the second major flashpoint at the Cincinnati Conference. Like the Roszell resolutions, it overwhelmingly passed 97-19 and therefore signified what James Birney framed as pitting "The General Conference vs. O. Scott." And this conflict soon gave way to the "Persecution of O. Scott" because his opponents, notably Winans, Stamper, Smith, and Bangs, accused him of violating church rules and committing the crime of religious falsehood.[148] Birney's coverage of this episode, coupled with the *Philanthropist's* reporting of the initial debate on slavery and abolition, set the standard for all secular antislavery periodicals across the free states. By the time the conference had ended, Orange Scott had become the face of abolition Methodism. His address to the general conference on the Roszel resolutions and what Birney termed his "triumphant answer" to the Winans-Stamper resolution helped make Scott's name synonymous with abolition Methodism.[149]

Scott's admission that he had written the pamphlet placed him in a precarious position. The Winans-Stamper resolution was designed to encourage institutional action against Scott.

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[145] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by the Rev. O. Scott, A Member of That Body; Presented During its Session in Cincinnati, Ohio, May 19, 1836. To Which is Added The Speech of the Rev. Mr. Scott, Delivered on the Floor of the General Conference, May 27, 1836* (New York: H.R. Piercy, Printer, 1836), Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed August 26, 2022), 18.
[146] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 18.
[147] "General Conference.," 197.
[148] "The General Conference vs. O. Scott.," *Philanthropist*, May 27, 1836, vol. 1, no. 22, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). "Persecution of O. Scott.," *Philanthropist*, June 17, 1836, vol. 1, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022).
[149] "The General Conference vs. O. Scott.," 2. Birney, who knew Scott from his attendance at the New England Anti-Slavery Society meeting in 1835, identified him as "our esteemed friend and brother."

Neither Winans nor Stamper hid their intentions. While they did not know that Scott had circulated the pamphlet, its title, "Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by a Member of that Body," indicated to them that its authorship came from one of the abolitionists. Winans excoriated the address during the afternoon of the May 24 session by claiming that it contained "THREE direct, flagrant falsehoods" which were the work of either "a reckless incendiary or a *non compos mentis*."[150] But such an allegation was not merely a simple complaint that the pamphlet was wrong. Falsehood was a specific offense in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and, by levying that charge, Winans and Stamper sought penalties against the author. Conviction could result in the offender's removal from the ministry. By making that charge, the proslavery militants indicated that they would not be satisfied with a mere censure as had been the case with Storrs: they wanted to make an example of Scott.

The morning of May 25, the day on which Scott would make his defense, the galleries were filled with spectators. As other business dominated the morning session, both the proslavery militants and Scott waited to return to the looming clash: the former wanting Scott punished and the latter hoping to vindicate himself from charges of falsehood. At approximately 11:30 am, as the gallery of bored spectators began to depart, Early called on Scott to deliver his remarks. After the motion was sustained, Scott began his speech by expressing frustration with how the entire situation had been handled. Accused of falsehood, he had to wait all morning until an hour before adjournment before he could speak in his defense. For Scott, however, the allegations were absurd because an error or misstatement did not equate to a deliberate falsehood. In one instance, Winans had accused Scott of committing a criminal falsehood because he had complained in his address that he only had one chance to speak about slavery.

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[150] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 17-19. *Non compos mentis* roughly translates to an insane individual.

Scott had, according to Winans, committed falsehood because of a mistake over a parliamentary rule that prohibited multiple speeches on the same subject until everyone had a chance to speak. Scott's complaint was a falsehood, this argument went, because he was complaining about something already covered in the rules. While Scott acknowledged that Winans was technically correct, he complained that he had been "misunderstood" and asked the delegates, "Ought this omission then to subject a brother to the high and heavy charge of falsehood?"[151]

The pamphlet, he explained, had simply been intended to provide a portrait of the debate over the Roszel resolutions and present his speech in a format that preserved his remarks free from the interruptions he had faced while delivering the speech on the conference floor. Scott, however, also addressed the charges of misrepresentation and falsehood that he faced. One is especially noteworthy. Winans was frustrated that he felt Scott's summary of the debate from May 12-13 misrepresented his views on slavery by characterizing him as believing slavery was right in all circumstances. According to Winans, he had simply employed Scott's own logic to show how it could be used to support slavery. Scott, however, countered by claiming that Winans misrepresented him. "I never made such a statement," he said of the suggestion that his logic could be used to fashion a proslavery argument, adding, "Bro. W.[inans] is making out his conclusion that *slavery is right under all circumstances*, [and] attributes to me, what I never said...."[152] In one important sense, however, Winans had identified the logic behind Scott's argument: a belief in moral absolutes.

This notion of moral absolutes cannot be overstated. If Scott's mission at the general conference had shifted from getting institutional action against slavery to the more modest object of exposing slavery for what it was, his ripostes to Winans certainly revealed the circumstantial

[151] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 19.
[152] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 20.

morality championed by many of the delegates. In his defense speech, Scott carried this perspective to its logical end. “Suppose I were to affirm that polygamy is right under *some* circumstances,” he declared before his speech was stifled by repeated objections from Winans and several other southern delegates.[153] Bishop Roberts, presiding over the session, sided with Scott and he was soon able to resume his argument. He noted:

> Suppose I were to affirm that polygamy is right under some circumstances, or no circumstances, or all circumstances – I soon come to conclusion, that it is wrong under all circumstances. But no, says brother Winans, I can prove from your own premises that polygamy is right under all circumstances. It was allowed, it is recognized, and not condemned in Jewish scriptures among the Jews, and therefore it is right, according to your own premises under all circumstances! Who does not readily see the sophistry of such an argument!”[154]

Scott’s choice of polygamy was a clever decision because it was an issue which the ministers opposed in all circumstances. In doing so, he underscored his absolute morality by forcing them to confront an issue on which they held that morality was an absolute matter of good and evil. But his remarks further demonstrated the gulf between him and many of his fellow Methodists. Winans agreed with Scott on the underlying issues in the debate over slavery as being a matter of good and evil. In Scott’s view, that is why Winans embraced the same logic he did. Winans had invoked absolute morality not because he wanted to discredit it but because he shared it. Scott made this point explicit in his defense speech by noting that Winans had invoked the ways that slavery was a divine, perpetual, and hereditary institution.

Scott continued to defend himself from the allegations of falsehood for the remainder of the morning session, referencing the other but less notable charges leveled against him: that he had treated slavery in abstract terms against Winans’ wishes, claimed southerners did not see

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[153] Scott admitted that the charge of falsehood in this case was “the strongest, and indeed, the principal position which brother W. has taken against me.”
[154] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 20.

slavery as sinful, expanded his speech in the pamphlet to include a section on the division of the Union, and downplayed the calamitous consequences of antislavery agitation.[155]

Scott's speech ended at 12:15 pm and left fifteen minutes until the normal time for the morning session to adjourn. In response to Scott's speech, Winans rose to offer a point of clarification: he had never intended to charge Scott with criminal falsehood. Instead, he said he had only charged the anonymous author of the pamphlet with falsehood. In reply, Scott rose back and retorted that Winans should have called for an "open Conference." Winans, however, was defiant. He said had originally assumed Scott was not the author of the pamphlet because he claimed that he thought too highly of him. The pamphlet, he observed, had convinced him of his error. Winans then claimed to have the support of a third of the conference on the charges that Scott had deliberately misrepresented his argument. Although he then demanded Roberts call for a vote, the general conference adjourned until the afternoon.

The afternoon session largely replayed the same contours and character of the debate over the Roszel resolutions: the overwhelming majority agreeing that Scott's abolitionism warranted condemnation but disagreeing about the scope or severity of that condemnation. When Daniel Ostrander of New York suggested referring the Winans-Stamper resolution to a committee so that it could secure broader support, the delegates were split. This division, like the other disagreements over slavery, fractured along geographical lines with northern delegates supporting a reference while southerners wanting to adopt the Winans-Stamper resolution outright. Of the ten speakers, five of them opposed referring the resolution to a select committee with three in favor of doing so. The other two speakers, Matthew Sorin of Philadelphia and Nathan Bangs of New York, used the opportunity to make a different point. Sorin criticized the

[155] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 20-21.

resolution because it did not go far enough and wanted the general conference to prohibit any form of notetaking before motioning in the gallery to James G. Birney. Similarly, Bangs used the opportunity to call for greater censorship of church proceedings before engaging in an anti-abolition polemic. Dismissing their effort to promote moral reform as "hopeless," Bangs argued the abolitionists had resolved to go about "doing evil that good may come." And the evil they had done, he concluded, was "to misrepresent – to garble – to publish our speeches without submitting them…." Only one speaker, Elias Bowen, offered what could be considered a defense of Scott. Even he supported forwarding the resolution to the select committee. Although he opposed Scott's conduct, he was convinced that Scott had acted "honestly" and therefore felt any resolution charging him with falsehood was inappropriate.[156]

But even among the supporters of the resolution, there was some disagreement over whether the target of their ire should be the pamphlet or Scott personally. Benjamin Drake of Mississippi, for example, opposed referring the resolution to a committee. Unlike some southern delegates, he believed that their "object was, the pamphlet" since the pamphlet, not Scott, was guilty of "doing the mischief." Drake worried that the address would encourage abolitionism and felt that discrediting it should be the priority of the general conference rather than admonishing Scott. Roszel, by contrast, took a different position. In the same way some of the proslavery militants had supported publicly identifying and condemning George Storrs and Samuel Norris, Roszel advocated pursuing stronger action against Scott. If the pamphlet was a "gross" misrepresentation that was "calculated to injure us," then it followed that Scott should be required "to come forward and express his regret and sorrow for the offence he has committed." For Roszel, the problem was not simply the pamphlet but its author because Scott had ensured

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[156] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 22-24.

the material would spread across the country. As a result, the issue was the "conduct" of the pamphlet's creator and Roszell therefore concluded that "no language is too strong."[157]

After the eventual success of the Winans-Stamper resolution by a 97-19 vote, the general conference turned its attention to other matters. In much of this business, Nathan Bangs took the lead, proposing to consecrate the bishops-elect and endorsing a report on the future of the church's Book Concern. This ambitious, twenty-four-point plan suggested retaining the Book Concern in New York City but expanding the publication operations of the church into the southern states.[158] Questions of the Book Concern, however, continued to play a significant role in the final days of the conference. By May 27, the delegates shifted their attention towards the next general conference, opting to set a general conference delegate to annual conference member ratio and settling on Baltimore as the site of their next meeting. Roszel brought an end to the convention on the evening of May 27 with a resolution that they would not meet again as a general conference until May 1, 1840.[159]

If one evaluated the Cincinnati Conference in terms of the overarching battle between slavery and abolition, it was a resounding and crushing defeat for the abolition Methodists. The general conference had condemned abolitionism and its leading advocates, official church periodicals – the *Christian Advocate* and the *Western Christian Advocate* – had embraced a policy of censorship, and more anti-abolitionists joined its ecclesiastical leadership. Wilbur Fisk being overwhelmingly elevated to the position of bishop symbolized the ways in which the Cincinnati Conference served as a reaction to the Lynn Conference. At Lynn, abolition

[157] *Address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 22-23.
[158] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 12, 1836, vol. 10, no. 51, p. 201, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022). While the plan suggested shuttering the depository at New Orleans, Bangs also proposed establishing three new periodicals in the South at Charleston, Richmond, and Nashville.
[159] "General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 19, 1836, vol. 10, no. 52, p. 205, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed July 29, 2022).

Methodists had successfully triumphed over a smaller anti-abolitionist faction. At Cincinnati, the face of that defeated movement not only returned, but was elevated to the highest ecclesiastical position in the church. By directing their efforts against Orange Scott and George Storrs, the anti-abolition and proslavery Methodists had targeted the two leaders of the antislavery conferences, impugning the integrity of the former and humiliating the latter. Much of the conventional wisdom reflected this perception of the conference. The *Niles Weekly Register* simply reported to its readers that abolitionism had been condemned by a vote of 122 to 14, indicating the broad opposition to abolitionism within the church.[160] A correspondent for the *New York Spectator* shared a similar prognosis, writing that they "hoped that this vote [on the Roszel resolutions] will … henceforth cease to agitate the councils of the church."[161]

Some abolitionists were also discouraged. Henry B. Stanton, during his speech at the New England Anti-Slavery Society, referenced the general conference and its conduct as an example of the way anti-abolitionists acquiesced to the South on everything.[162] One writer to the *Philanthropist*, claiming to be an eyewitness, said that he found the conference to be a mixed bag. He praised the church's commitment to rebuilding the Book Concern and endorsed its missionary labors, but he also lamented its actions on slavery. "They have cut off the hope of the slave, as far as it is in their power," he complained.[163] William Lloyd Garrison viewed the Cincinnati Conference in especially grim terms. "The Methodist church has been as a light shining in a dark place," he wrote, "but what is it now?" Echoing Scott's framing of Methodism,

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[160] Abolition.," *Niles Weekly Register*, June 6, 1836, vol. 50, no. 1289, p. 233, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).
[161] "Methodist General Conference.," *New York Spectator*, May 23, 1836, vol. 39, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022).
[162] H.B. Stanton, "Mr. Stanton's Speech at the N.E.A.S.S. Convention.," *Liberator*, June 11, 1836, vol. 6, no. 24, Gale, 19th century newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022). Stanton alluded to the censuring of Storrs and Norris but only mentioned Orange Scott by name.
[163] The Witness, "Untitled.," *The Philanthropist*, June 24, 1836, vol. 1, no. 26, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).

Garrison concluded that the church had succumbed to an "infection" which had transformed an institution that was "like salt in the midst of corruption" into "one mass of corruption." But Garrison's uncharacteristically forlorn lamentation soon gave way to a more familiar indignation when he ruminated on the way Scott had been treated. "Here we have, as a gazing stock for infidels," he fumed, "the highest ecclesiastical body of a large church, whose 'dignity is outraged' by a persecuted member calmly and heroically defending himself and his brethren."[164]

Some supporters of the general conference were exuberant with the results. A delegate from the Baltimore Conference, writing to the *National Intelligencer*, celebrated the anti-abolition resolutions, declaring, "The expression of the Church is unequivocal."[165] Similarly, the *Baltimore Patriot* endorsed the conference's action against the abolition Methodists. Their analysis, republished approvingly by the *Virginia Free Press*, praised the general conference and cited the overwhelming support the anti-abolition majority had enjoyed.[166] In another instance, Alvan Baird, a correspondent to the *Arkansas Gazette*, sent the general conference proceedings in the *Western Christian Advocate* to the paper's editor as an example of a major victory against abolitionism. In Baird's framing, the Cincinnati Conference was a symbol that could show anti-abolition Christians across the South that they were "acting in perfect concert with the great body of Christians with whom I am now connected."[167]

The *New York Courier* similarly praised the general conference as signifying that "The Methodist Church has set its seal of reprobation on the madness of abolitionism" and concluded

[164] "The Methodist General Conference.," *Liberator*, June 11, 1836, vol. 6, no. 24, p. 95, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).
[165] "The Book Concern of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Abolitionism.," *National Intelligencer*, May 21, 1836, vol. 24, no. 7262, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022).
[166] "Methodist General Conference.," *Virginia Free Press*, May 26, 1836, vol. 29, no. 17, p. 1, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022).
[167] Alvan Baird, "For the Arkansas Gazette," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 28, 1836, vol. 17, no. 28, p. 2, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022).

that such an act had earned their denomination a "high honor."[168] Most illustrative of this perspective was Rev. J.C. Postell, a Methodist minister in Orangeburg, South Carolina, who delivered a speech on his opinions of slavery and touched on the Cincinnati Conference as an essential chapter in the struggle against abolitionism. Echoing Scott's Wheel of Reform and the way in which religious action preceded political action, Postell declared, "The councils of the Church must be at open war with the Bible before it can be introduced there [in Congress]."[169] He also adopted and inverted Scott's premise about the complementary nature of religion and politics by arguing that an abolitionist could not be viewed as either a "citizen" or a "Christian."[170]

For Postell, the Cincinnati Conference had vindicated the proslavery persuasion because it had crushed Scott's Wheel of Reform before it could even get into motion. The general conference, he boasted, should be "altogether enough to satisfy every citizen and Christian, that no Methodist could be an Abolitionist." For him, the delegates had forever dispensed with the argument that the Methodist Church was built on an antislavery foundation. Pulling out a letter he had written to abolitionist La Roy Sunderland, he argued that no one could say that Methodism had an antislavery history because the Cincinnati Conference had declared that view to be "a libel on truth." Believing the general conference had secured victory over what he termed "Yankee Abolitionism" and the "Abolition Methodists," he crowed:

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[168] N.Y. Courier, quoted in "Anti-Abolition in Ohio," *Washington Globe*, May 30, 1836, vol. 5, no. 299, p. 2, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022). N.Y. Sunday Morning News, quoted in, "Multiple News Items.," *Daily Commercial Bulletin*, June 13, 1836, vol. 2, no. 12, p. 2, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022). *The New York Sunday Morning News* is an excellent example of a paper that backed Roszel's resolutions, stating it was "glad to see so strong and decided an expression of disapprobation of the course and conduct of these contemptible fanatics" and proof that the church was "a highly respectable body of sincere christians."

[169] J.C. Postell, quoted in "Slavery.," *United States Telegraph*, August 19, 1836, vol. 11, no. 227, p. 2, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 29, 2022); "Clerical Man-Stealer.," *Emancipator*, August 4, 1836, vol. 1, no. 14, p. 4, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022).

[170] Postell, quoted in "Slavery.," 2.

> Did you think because you had enlisted a British Lord, and George Storrs, and Brother O. Scott, as you style him, and a few others of like stamp, that you could wield the iron sceptre of despotism from the dictator's chair...? If so, come and visit the South with your champions … and you will be taught your mistake…. No Christian minister can act your part – no Methodist can recognize you as one of their order – Abolition Methodists may – Bible Methodists cannot.[171]

Postell's classification of the three leading champions of abolitionism – George Thompson, George Storrs, and Orange Scott – underscores a noteworthy consequence of the 1836 general conference. It took Scott from a still somewhat obscure antislavery presiding elder and turned him into one of the national faces of abolitionism inside the entire Methodist Episcopal Church.

The respectively calumnious and jubilant predictions did not adequately summarize the consequences of the clash in Cincinnati. In some respects, William A. Smith was keenly attuned with this reality when he wrote a circular letter to voice his frustrations with the conference. While he praised the forceful action taken "against the wild schemes of Abolitionists," he believed the proslavery militants had lost a much larger battle: that over the election of new bishops. The general conference, torn between four major factions, had failed to elect a slaveholding bishop. In a sense, the defeat of abolitionism had cultivated seeds for its potential long-term success. The proslavery and anti-abolition alliance that had so effectively crushed abolition Methodism was deeply fragile, and Orange Scott played a crucial role in weakening the bonds of that alliance even further. By making the debate about slavery and its morality rather than abolitionism, Scott had forced the anti-abolitionists to grapple with the nature of their alliance with the proslavery militants. Smith's frustrations with the election of new bishops, then, was a symptom of a larger, unspoken problem: he did not trust his northern anti-abolition allies and he believed slavery could only be safe if power was vested in the hands of slaveholders.[172]

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[171] Postell, quoted in "Slavery.," 2.
[172] Smith went so far as to suggest that Fisk, Morris, and Waugh were elected "on the principles of abolitionism."

This led Smith to view proslavery prospects in a grim light, and he wondered aloud if plans should not be made to create “a Southern General Conference” in the future.[173]

By turning the discussion from abolition back to slavery itself, Scott revealed that many anti-abolition Methodists and proslavery militants held fundamentally different objectives which, although it encouraged them to be occasional allies, also made sustained, long-term cooperation between them difficult. Anti-abolitionism, embodied at the general conference by Nathan Bangs, sought to suppress discussion of slavery because it feared what proslavery militants would do if the peculiar institution were threatened. To justify their position, anti-abolitionists had cultivated a moral framework that Scott had aptly characterized as circumstantial morality. But the proslavery militants wanted abolitionism vanquished as a step towards their ultimate endgame: the creation of a religious life in which the churches of America openly affirmed and approved of the peculiar institution. The inaction and silence that Bangs supported, then, was insufficient to these radicals. By emphasizing a discussion of slavery, Scott forced anti-abolitionists to consider that reality. And in their victory, the anti-abolitionists and proslavery militants had lost the common enemy they had once shared: the looming threat of the Lynn Conference. All the while, Orange Scott had only emerged with greater fame and renown in antislavery circles. When the New Richmond Anti-Slavery Society held its anniversary meeting, the members unanimously adopted two resolutions singling out Scott for praise. Declaring that “we highly approve of the firm and independent course pursued by brother Scott in his defense of abolitionism,” the society

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[173] William A. Smith, quoted in “A Southern General Conference!!,” *Zion’s Herald*, September 21, 1836, vol. 7, no. 38, p. 150, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022)’ “The Southern General Conference.,” *Zion’s Herald*, November 11, 1836, vol. 7, no. 49, p. 190, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022). When challenged on his proposal, Smith wrote to *the Pittsburg Conference Journal* that the plan for creating a southern conference did not originate with him but had been agreed upon by all southern delegates at Cincinnati.

noted that he had not simply defended their movement. He had also offered a "manly defence of the principles of Christianity, philanthropy and our republican institutions."[174]

The rise of the Cincinnati Fourteen as personified by Scott, further symbolized the mixed nature of the 1836 general conference. Although they had failed, their defeat – covered heavily in the antislavery press – more closely linked the abolition Methodists with their antislavery brethren across the free states. La Roy Sunderland's *Zion's Watchman*, for example, prominently published the names of the Cincinnati Fourteen in an article which William Lloyd Garrison republished on the front page of the *Liberator*.[175] Amos A. Phelps, the editor of the *Emancipator*, used Birney's notes in the *Philanthropist* as well as the *Zion's Watchman* and *Zion's Herald* in his own paper's coverage of the general conference.[176] And as we have seen, Garrison himself covered the rise and fall of Methodism at Cincinnati. Between those publications, published respectively in Cincinnati, New York, and Boston, the message of abolition Methodism spread to antislavery Americans across the free states. Scott, because of his speeches at the general conference and his pamphlet, emerged as the symbolic representative of the Cincinnati Fourteen and, eventually, the face of abolition Methodism. His pamphlet had become a best-seller by the end of the summer. Beginning in July 1836, Birney's *Philanthropist* advertised the pamphlet in its section on antislavery literature. This promotion meant that Scott's antislavery pamphlet came to share space alongside three of the four people who had converted

[174] "Anti-Slavery News.," *Emancipator and Free American*, July 21, 1836, vol. 1, no. 12, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed January 19, 2023).
[175] *Zion's Watchman*, quoted in "Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Liberator*, June 25, 1836, vol. 6, no. 26, p. 1, Gale, 19th Century Newspapers (accessed August 26, 2022).
[176] For the *Emancipator's* coverage and use of these papers, see "Methodist General Conference.," *Emancipator and Free American*, May 26, 1836, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 2; "General Conference.," *Emancipator and Free American*, June 9, 1836, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 2; "Protest.," *Emancipator and Free American*, June 30, 1836, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 2-3; "Slavery in the Church. Methodist Church. General Conference.," *Emancipator and Free American*, July 21, 1836, vol. 1, no. 12, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed January 19, 2023).

him to abolitionism: Amos A. Phelps, George Bourne, and Lydia Maria Child.[177] Scott, a convert to abolitionism because of antislavery literature, had now become an author of that same material.

Beyond praising "Our excellent brother Orange Scott" and championing "his manly and Christian deportment," the *Friend of Man* reported that his speech had become a bestseller. "His reported speech has been much sought after," the paper observed, adding that it had been "read by great numbers, and generally with a convincing power." While this readership extended beyond the Methodist Episcopal Church, the *Friend of Man* nevertheless credited Scott with being the man who had been "greatly instrumental in bringing a large number of his brethren to take right views of abolition."[178] Even in defeat, then, Scott had still won victories in the information war by revealing to abolition-inclined Methodists where their church stood on slavery and promoting an alternative vision for the church.

James G. Birney, the man who had witnessed much of the proceedings firsthand, recorded his impressions midway through the conference on May 20 and, although discouraged, remained optimistic. He wrote:

> Notwithstanding the present aspect of things, we will not, for a single moment, yield to the desponding influences, which such conduct in itself has a tendency to create. No: We doubt not, good – real good – will, in some way, come out of it. There are in the M.E. Church, thousands who walk in faith and prevail in prayer. They must be alarmed at the conduct of their leaders – and, if nothing better can be done, they will reject their further guidance. Indeed, every day brings to us fresh proof, creating in us fresh distrust, of the efficiency of large *ecclesiastical* organizations to promote the cause of true piety. They have strength – but, we fear, it is not the strength of religious principle; - they have

[177] "Anti-Slavery Publications.," *Philanthropist*, July 8, 1836, vol. 1, no. 28, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 29, 2022). Scott's pamphlet continued to be sold by the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society and promoted by the *Philanthropist* for the remainder of the year. It was also printed and published in New York, vindicating many anti-abolitionist fears about its potential influence.
[178] "Labors of Mr. Birney," *Friend of Man*, vol. 1, no. 24, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

> wisdom, but is there not reason to suspect that it is the wisdom of the world – of a party, and not that *which is from above*?[179]

Orange Scott soon began to embody this sentiment. Even in defeat, he had, in the eyes of Birney and others, exposed the Methodist Episcopal Church of wielding its ecclesiastical might on behalf of proslavery militants. The Roszel resolutions, the Winans-Stamper resolution, and the strength of the proslavery and the anti-abolition forces illustrated that abolitionism was still confined to the New England states. Like Birney, who supposed there to be thousands of latent abolitionists in the ranks of the church, Scott turned his sights from ecclesiastical action against slavery to a grassroots-oriented strategy. In the same way he had, unintentionally or otherwise, sowed dissension within the anti-abolition ranks, the general conference also planted seeds about church government in his own mind which would germinate in the coming years. Cincinnati, then, had taught Scott a valuable lesson: that the Wheel of Reform could roll in the opposite direction and that the powers the church possessed to promote moral good could also stifle it. The blossoming of these seeds is the subject of the following chapters.

[179] "Debate on Slavery and Abolition.," *Philanthropist*, May 20, 1836, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022).

Chapter 8: Orange Scott versus Episcopal Methodism, 1836-1838

In the waning days of the Cincinnati General Conference, the four bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church – Robert Roberts, Joshua Soule, Elijah Hedding, and James Andrew – published a pastoral letter that was designed to convey the opinions of the church on the host of issues facing the denomination. Of greatest concern to the bishops was what they described as "a very considerable decrease [in members] during the four years last."[1] The bishops devoted nearly the entirety of their address towards discussing the eight solutions they had identified. The first five of these were largely innocuous. They called for a return to first principles, enforcing Church Discipline, emphasizing education, distributing religious tracts, and enlarging missionary work. The eighth point, a concise paragraph, discussed the need to balance ministerial support with the need for ministers to live modestly. Points six and seven, taking up over a quarter of the entire article, dealt with a central issue at stake: abolitionism and the agitation of that subject at the general conference. The core of this critique of abolitionism rested on the anti-abolition Methodist understanding of the role of religious institutions in republican society.

The pastoral address reveals the bishops' conceptions of what it meant to be a Christian citizen under a democratic or republican government, and where the church fit into that society. While they strongly condemned mob violence against abolitionists, they nevertheless justified the underlying sentiment: that abolitionists needed to stop speaking. After paying homage to freedom of speech, the bishops posited that abolitionists and anti-abolitionists should commit to

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[1] Robert R. Roberts, Joshua Soule, Elijah Hedding, and James O. Andrew, "Pastoral Address.," *Western Christian Advocate*, June 3, 1836, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 21, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). This document was written during the Cincinnati Conference by a committee composed of Nathan Bangs, William Capers, and Thomas Morris.

"The exercise of mutual forbearance."[2] That proposed solution, however, ultimately gave anti-abolitionists and mobs exactly what they wanted: silence. Instead of censorship by mobs, the bishops wanted abolitionists to self-censor.

This attitude towards freedom of speech and freedom of expression was a symptom of the larger disagreement over the role of religion in a secular society. Abolition Methodists like Orange Scott had opposed splitting society into religious and secular spheres. Their subsequent emphasis on the connection between politics and religion helped to increasingly blur the lines between church and state. The bishops, by contrast, held that the church needed to avoid political entanglements and cede certain controversial matters to civil institutions. While abolition Methodists did not necessarily disagree that the church should stay out of government, they nevertheless believed that religion should influence society and, in turn, the government that it purportedly represented. Roberts, Soule, Hedding, and Andrew, however, championed the opposite perspective because they believed politics corrupted religion. In part, they wrote:

> Among other things which have tended not a little to check the progress of pure religion, may we not include that of political agitations? In a country where the constitution guaranties to every male citizen of full age the right of suffrage, where the freedom of speech and of the press is considered an inviolable right, where free discussion and debate on all civil as well as religious subjects is permitted unrestrainedly, there must be a great danger of these high privileges being abused, by suffering calm and dispassionate discussion to degenerate into angry recrimination…. These remarks are not made with a view to abridge you of any of your civil or political privileges…Into the party politics of the day we enter not. We leave every man – every Methodist and friend to Methodism – to act for himself in these respects. But what we wish is, as far as possible, to guard you against allowing yourselves to be drawn aside from paramount duties, to mix in that angry strife of political contests which tend to disturb the peace of society, to alienate the affections of brethren from each other, and to interrupt that harmony of feeling which is essential to spiritual prosperity….[3]

[2] Roberts, Soule, Hedding, and Andrew, "Pastoral Address.," 21.
[3] Roberts, Soule, Hedding, and Andrew, "Pastoral Address.," 21.

While the bishops' remarks in this instance were not strictly confined to abolitionism, this assertion illustrates the way church leadership offered a fundamentally different vision for Methodism than the antislavery faction within the church that Orange Scott had come to lead. By following this discussion of abolitionism with a broader criticism of engagement in politics, the bishops conflated government action and party politics. In doing so, they took the portion that an Orange Scott would agree with – that ministers should avoid partisanship – and wedded it to a perspective that he did not share: that Methodists should avoid agitating on issues with political dimensions.

This chapter explores this fundamental disagreement between Scott's brand of abolition Methodism and the opposing perspective championed by the anti-abolitionists in the northern church. Slavery, while an important issue in its own right, proved to be a divisive force within American Methodism because it exposed other fundamental disagreements within the church. Scott, undeterred by his defeat at Cincinnati, returned to Holliston as committed as he had been before he left for the general conference. His defiance in the months and years that followed further cemented the growing rift between abolition Methodists and supporters of the anti-abolition consensus. Between 1836 and 1838, Scott became an even more public figure in the broader antislavery movement, and he continued to wield his ministerial influence to promote abolitionism across the New England Conference. The clash at Cincinnati, then, served as a springboard that catapulted Scott from a prominent New England abolition Methodist into a religious and secular leader of the antislavery cause inside and outside Massachusetts.

In addition to chronicling Orange Scott's life during these years, this chapter will pay special attention to Scott's increased involvement with abolitionism as well as his continued debate with religious rivals inside the Methodist Episcopal Church. This struggle culminated in

1837-1838 with a confrontation against A.B. Snow, Hubbard Winslow, and even Bishop Elijah Hedding himself over the very nature of what it meant to be a Methodist and a republican. In these years, Scott continued to refine his Wheel of Reform and staked out an even more forceful position in support of freedom of speech and opposition to mob violence. This conflict of visions between a secular, anti-abolition Methodism on one hand and an evangelistic, antislavery Methodism continued to expose a burgeoning rift within the Methodist community. The divisive issues the church began to face in the mid-1830s – slavery, abolitionism, the power of bishops, and even the rights of annual conferences to govern themselves – must be interpreted as part of a larger struggle. And Orange Scott played a pivotal role in exposing this widening rift.

In response to the bishops' Pastoral Address as well as the general anti-abolition conduct of the church, the Cincinnati Fourteen penned a "Protest" on their way out of Cincinnati at the end of May.[4] This statement, which circulated to a wider, secular antislavery audience in the *Philanthropist* and *Emancipator*, reproved the general conference's adoption of the Roszel resolutions. However, their overarching argument laid a very crucial foundation that would determine the course of many abolition Methodists in years that followed. They criticized the Cincinnati General Conference from a theological perspective, not strictly from an antislavery one. "We protest the doings of this General Conference," they declared, "because we believe those doings were *unconstitutional*, anti-Methodistical, not warranted by the discipline of the church, and in opposition to the plain letter thereof." The resolution against Storrs and Norris, the Protest further argued, was wrong, not because it undermined the work of abolitionism, but because the conference had "entirely overstepped *all* the *previous* steps directed to be taken by

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[4] "To the Bishops and Members in General Conference convened at Cincinnati.," *Philanthropist*, June 17, 1836, vol. 1, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 26, 2022). "Protest.," *Emancipator and Free American*, June 30, 1836, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 2-3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed January 19, 2023).

our discipline" and acted with power that the general conference did not constitutionally possess.[5]

While this perspective suggested that the Cincinnati Fourteen prioritized the issue of church government more than the issue of slavery, it is crucial to understand that these two issues were deeply interconnected and could not be separated from one another. Scott, who became increasingly critical of episcopal power during the 1830s, arrived at that position precisely because of the way the bishops and the church wielded their power in the debate over slavery. The Protest against what was viewed as an unconstitutional usurpation, then, underscored the antislavery sentiments that created the abuse of power in the first place. The Methodist Episcopal Church's effort to stamp out abolitionism, however, only grew more aggressive and more personal in the months that followed.

Orange Scott first returned to Holliston. Unfazed by defeat at Cincinnati or the judgment on falsehood charges that he would soon face at Springfield, he immediately returned to his antislavery activities. To commemorate Independence Day, he spent his July 4th at Natick, Massachusetts to deliver an afternoon lecture on slavery. The following week, he departed for Springfield for the annual conference, attending a quarterly meeting at South Brookfield on July 9 and 10 on his way there.[6] The conference began on July 16, 1836, with Elijah Hedding acting as presiding bishop. The early sessions were generally unremarkable, with principal business being focused on the creation of committees to deal with matters such as the *Zion's Herald*, education, slavery, and peace.[7] As a *Zion's Herald* correspondent put it, "there has but little occurred of special and general interest." One issue which the correspondent singled out on the

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[5] "To the Bishops and Members in General Conference convened at Cincinnati.," 2.
[6] *Zion's Herald*, June 29, 1836, vol. 7, no. 29, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[7] "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, July 20, 1836, vol. 7, no. 29, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

afternoon session of that opening day, however, was the emergence of the issue of peace as a subject of conversation among Methodists ministers. The conference committee on peace furnished their report, and the conference hosted Rev. Henry C. Wright, an agent of the American Peace Society, and allowed him to deliver a speech. "His [Wright's] very appearance indicates that his soul is in the work," the correspondent favorably wrote, adding, "If a man's sentiments are to have any influence upon his life, it is highly important that peace principles be widely disseminated at the present day."[8]

This conference marked the first documented evidence of Scott's complicated relationship with the peace movement. The American Peace Society, an organization devoted to advocating pacificist principles, was one which Scott simultaneously felt sympathy and hostility towards. This subject will be explored in greater detail in the coming chapters when the issues of peace and non-resistance became increasingly significant in antislavery and reform discourse. By 1836, however, Wright had cultivated a friendly relationship with many reform-minded Methodists such as La Roy Sunderland and other abolition Methodists in the northern church.

The opening days commemorated the anniversary of the conference's Temperance Society, ordained deacons and travelling elders, and conducted business on missionary matters. A correspondent for the *Zion's Herald*, Apollos Hale, offered an especially detailed account of the missionary society meeting. This meeting, inaugurated with an opening hymn by John Lord, Orange Scott's presiding elder while he had been a stationed minister in Lancaster, New Hampshire, delved into the purpose of Methodist missionary labor. Nathan Bangs, the anti-

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[8] "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, July 27, 1836, vol. 7, no. 30, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). "Peace.," *Christian Register and Boston Observer*, August 6, 1836, vol. 15, no. 32, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). *The Christian Mirror* echoed the *Zion's Herald's* perspective on Wright and the New England Conference, observing that Wright's message had been embraced by the annual conference. "The Bishop [Hedding] and all the preachers seemed to be desirous of having the subject introduced," the correspondent for the Mirror observed, adding that, "There is a spirit of Peace among the preachers of the Methodist connection that is truly cheering."

abolition editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, delivered one of the first major addresses for the society.[9] Bangs' speech, while dealing principally with the object of promoting Christianity across the world, embodied an important sentiment which must be explored further. This attitude characterized much of the tone of the Springfield Conference and its significance to the struggle over slavery within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Just like the pastoral letter he helped write for the bishops during the Cincinnati Conference, Bangs reiterated his belief that abolitionism threatened to shatter the unity of the church.

His speech, however, brought this position directly to the abolition-leaning New England Conference. This did not make his speech reactionary; in some respects, it was radical and ambitious. He spoke of a "mighty revolution which has taken place in the Christian world" that would one day make "the kingdom of Christ" cover the entire earth. "This is the ground on which all Christians can meet," he urged listeners, "And however Abolitionists and Anti-Abolitionists may disagree about the means to be employed, *we all hate Slavery*, - we unite in this." This statement was not intended to be divisive. It was a call to unity. But it is important to note that these assertions ultimately promoted the discord that Bangs sought to avoid because his argument was predicated on a fundamental misunderstanding of the differences between these two Methodist factions. Bangs demonstrated this miscalculation in the sentence that immediately followed: "There is no slavery this side of hell so debasing as that of sin."[10] While uncontroversial to a body of evangelical Christians, this declaration also rested upon the assumption that chattel slavery was a sin no different than the host of others in the world. If

[9] A.H., "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, August 3, 1836, vol. 7, no. 31, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). In "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, July 27, 1836, vol. 7, no. 30, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022), a different correspondent to the *Herald* explained that "Br. Hale" would provide the newspaper with an account of the missionary meeting. "Br. Hale" likely refers to Apollos Hale, who was ordained a travelling deacon at the Springfield Conference.
[10] Nathan Bangs, quoted in A.H., "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, August 3, 1836, vol. 7, no. 31, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

abolition Methodists believed evangelization meant challenging sin and all its manifestations, Bangs' call to unity required them to stop opposing the manifestations of sin in the name of opposing sin itself. This meant that, according to the anti-abolitionists, unity could only occur if abolition Methodists accepted unity on anti-abolition terms. Moreover, it also placed a greater preeminence on maintaining peace and harmony within the church than it did making sure the church was an institution worthy of that peace and harmony.

The Committee on Slavery, chaired by Jotham Horton, offered the opposite perspective.[11] Horton's report and proposed resolutions crystallized this emerging rift within the Methodist Episcopal community. Where Bangs, the bishops, and anti-abolition Methodists feared the church's unity would fracture over agitation, Horton contended that the church needed to bear witness against slavery if it was to be properly understood as a Christian church. "Why does the Discipline of the M.E. Church pronounce slavery a great evil, if her ministers may not open their lips against it?" his report asked." Abolition Methodism could not acquiesce to the form of unity proposed by the anti-abolitionists for two principal reasons. First, as most clearly enunciated by Horton in his report, slavery undermined the idea of self-ownership. In part, he defined a slave as a person "deprived of his *right* to *himself*" who had lost the natural rights to reason, to be educated, and, most importantly, "to follow the dictates of his own conscience in the worship of his Maker." The peculiar institution, the committee ultimately resolved, was rooted upon "the anti-Christian and savage principle, that might makes right." Second, Horton and the rest of the

[11] A.H., "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, August 3, 1836, vol. 7, no. 31, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Jotham Horton attended the meeting of the conference missionary society on July 15 when Nathan Bangs delivered his remarks on missions, slavery, and abolition.

committee determined that public opinion on slavery could only change as a result of "the free and firm expression of sentiment and duty in regard to it."[12]

These assertions echo the brand of abolitionism which Scott had popularized, and underscore why compromise was becoming more difficult for Methodists. As Scott had illustrated in 1835, it was not slavery that animated him but the principles which had created it. Evangelization, then, could only occur when accompanied by abolitionism because the latter completed and fulfilled the former. The final of the proposed resolutions from the committee reflected the connection between Christian morality and political reform, declaring that "although all great moral reforms must ultimately have a political bearing" it remained "*a great moral question*" and "a proper subject for the moral action of Christians and Christian ministers, in their individual and associated capacity."[13]

Despite support from most ministers, the annual conference did not approve the committee's resolutions on slavery. As Horton explained to Benjamin Kingsbury, the decision represented "no surrender of principle" and was instead a gesture of goodwill towards the anti-abolition minority.[14] In a sense, both the abolition and anti-abolition camps championed the language of inter-denominational harmony and encouraged unity among the entire church even if they had very different visions of what that unity would look like. The *Western Christian Advocate* regarded development as proof that the New England Conference was "returning again to sober Methodism" even if it still had traces of "a little of Garrisonism."[15] The paper's

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[12] J. Horton, "Report of the Committee on Slavery and Abolition, Appointed by the New England Conference, at its late session at Springfield.," *Zion's Herald*, August 3, 1836, vol. 7, no. 31, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[13] Horton, "Report of the Committee on Slavery and Abolition," 2.
[14] Horton, "Report of the Committee on Slavery and Abolition," 2.
[15] "Report of the New England Conference on Slavery and Abolition.," *Western Christian Advocate*, August 26, 1836, vol. 3, no. 18, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

sanguine prediction of anti-abolition victory, however, was largely an illusion. The underlying questions that had divided both groups of New England Methodists remained unresolved. Unlike the Cincinnati General Conference, however, both sides came away with what they could consider victories.

Anti-abolition Methodists won the early victories. The annual conference passed a resolution criticizing abolition Methodist and *Zion's Watchman* editor La Roy Sunderland for some of his coverage of the Cincinnati General Conference, although Orange Scott and Jotham Horton were quick to point out in the weeks after the annual conference that anti-abolition publications had exaggerated what was intended to be a mild reproach.[16] But one of the more lasting consequences came shortly after the Sunderland matter had been concluded. Orange Scott later alleged that, during the conference, Elijah Hedding had issued him an ultimatum: either he "pledge" to "refrain from writing and lecturing on Slavery and Abolition" or lose his position as presiding elder. When Scott refused to "pledge where conscience was concerned," Hedding's threat came to fruition.[17] Scott was stripped of his position as presiding elder and reassigned to Lowell, Massachusetts as a stationed minister. As Scott recalled in his autobiography, "This movement produced a re-action in the feelings of the abolitionists and determined them more than ever to oppose to the death, the monster Slavery."[18] While Scott's statement cannot be said

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[16] J. Horton, "To the Editor of the Zion's Herald," *Zion's Herald*, August 10, 1836, vol. 7, no. 32, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). O. Scott, "La Roy Sunderland.," September 14, 1836, vol. 7, no. 37, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). For his part, Horton argued that his resolution had been misrepresented by the *Herald*, claiming that the original resolution against Sunderland only amounted to a slight criticism of his "unguarded" writing. Scott, however, offered greater clarity. Writing to the *Herald* because the *Christian Advocate* had refused to publish him, Scott contended that the annual conference had watered down a resolution charging Sunderland with slander. The final resolution, he wrote, simply criticized Sunderland for misrepresentation. Scott boasted that they had even removed the word "guilty" from the final resolution.

[17] Orange Scott and Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott Compiled from His Personal Narrative, Correspondence, And Other Authentic Sources of Information* (New York: C. Prindle and L.C. Matlack, at the Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1847), 36-37.

[18] "New England Conference. Stations of the Preachers.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 5, 1836, vol. 10, no. 50, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 36-37. Scott made this public in an open letter he wrote in August to Elijah Hedding but admitted that he did not believe

to have characterized the abolition Methodists during the Springfield Conference, it certainly characterized his own perspective in the aftermath of the general and annual conferences. The annual conference, however, played an integral role in protecting Scott from the censure of the broader church. The Springfield Conference had to adjudicate the matter of falsehood that had been leveled on him during the Cincinnati Conference. Joseph A. Merrill, an abolitionist and mentor of Scott's, served as head of the committee to investigate the charges and exonerated him. Although Bangs had personally withdrawn his own allegations against Scott, this acquittal nevertheless angered the proslavery and anti-abolition wings of the church.[19]

The Springfield Conference, then, represented a crucial juncture for the New England Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church more broadly. Both sides in the dispute in the northern church sought some degree of de-escalation, but that denominational harmony could occur only if abolition was removed as a subject for ecclesiastical consideration. In some respects, the compromise succeeded in the short-term. Ministers on both sides of the abolition question had worked together during the conference, with Jotham Horton serving alongside anti-abolitionists in the missionary society and Orange Scott being elected as a manager for the New England Conference Temperance Society.[20] Bangs' speech before the missionary society, as we

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it to be unconstitutional since he acknowledged that bishops had the power to appoint and demote presiding elders at will. See O. Scott, "Letter to Rev. Bishop Hedding.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 31, 1836,

[19] J.A. Merrill, "Report Of the Committee on the Case of the Rev. O. Scott, accepted by the New England conference, at its session in Springfield, Mass., held July 13th, 1836, and ordered to be published in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, *Zion's Herald*, and *Zion's Watchman*.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 26, 1836, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). A Voice from Georgia, "Gross Dissimulations.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 26, 1836, vol. 1, no. 43, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). The author of this article, which originally appeared in the *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, reacted to Scott's acquittal as a grievous wrong since it meant he had been allowed to spread "palpably false" information without consequence. The writer then used Scott's acquittal at the New England Conference to make the case for disunion in church and state. This would also become an issue during the 1840 general conference in Baltimore.

[20] A.H., "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, August 3, 1836, vol. 7, no. 31, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). "New England Conference Temperance Society.," *Zion's Herald*, August 10, 1836, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). At the end of the society's temperance meeting on July 16, 1836, members elected officers for the ensuing year. This included Orange Scott as

have seen, had stressed common ground between anti-abolitionists and abolitionists within the church on conversion. The conference and its aftermath partly bore out Bangs' hopes.

As the committee on slavery had made clear, however, the vision of unity as touted by Hedding and Bangs could not be sustained indefinitely within the New England Conference. The conference's abolitionism had not waned significantly since the Lynn Conference. When the New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society met to commemorate its first anniversary during the Springfield Conference, it had lost only one member while adding twenty-nine more, marking a net growth rate of forty percent in its first year. On the other hand, the abolition Methodists also hoped to defuse tensions within the church, evidenced by Horton's committee withdrawing the resolutions on slavery. Abolition Methodists also admitted that "mild language is better calculated to allay prejudice" and they resolved that "we will endeavor to avoid all harsh and unkind language...."[21] Nevertheless, the continued growth of the society reflected a sustained shift in favor of antislavery action that mutual de-escalation would not be able to solve for long.

As seen in the previous chapters, Orange Scott saw his evangelical ministry and his antislavery activity as being interconnected. Becoming an abolitionist did not mean he had abandoned his earlier work because he viewed his abolitionism as an outward manifestation of religious faith. As a result, Scott did not regard the loss of his position as presiding elder as gravely as he might have. He partly welcomed the opportunity to return to his roots as a popular preacher and stationed minister. Scott's new station, Lowell, was a great opportunity for him to secure conversions and promote abolitionism. The burgeoning industrial town represented fertile

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a manager, Phineas Crandall as secretary, and David Kilburn, Scott's replacement as presiding elder of Providence District, as president.

[21] Phineas Crandall, "New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society.," *Zion's Herald*, August 10, 1836, vol. 7, no. 32, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Orange Scott was selected as a manager for the society with Joseph A. Merrill being elected president and Jotham Horton serving as corresponding secretary.

ground for both. Alongside John Parker, the other minister stationed at Lowell, Scott arrived to find a church in need of improvement. It was, he recalled later in his autobiography, "not more than one tenth abolitionists."[22] For Scott and Parker, then, the challenge of their new assignment would be to simultaneously promote religious revival and inculcate antislavery sentiment. As Scott wrote of their time in Lowell, they sought to "pursue a prudent course to bring all over to the cause of Christ, and the bleeding slave."[23] Scott's language of "prudent course" is noteworthy considering the conduct of the abolition Methodists at Springfield. The abolitionists had deliberately sought to tone down some of their perceived radicalism. Rather than force resolutions that were offensive to the anti-abolitionists, for example, they instead withdrew them.[24] In a similar manner, Scott sought to promote abolitionism more prudently in the months after Cincinnati and Springfield.

His plan was very simple. He had long believed in the transformative power of religion and planned to connect his ministry more fully with his abolitionism. In his controversy with Thomas Whittemore and his ministry during the 1820s and 1830s, he had championed the belief that people needed religion to become more virtuous. Abolitionism, then, could spread only if it was accompanied by religious evangelization. As a result, Scott's "first object" upon arriving at Lowell was not to lecture on the evils of slavery, but "to secure the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among the people."[25] Religious conversion, he believed, would transform into a religious zeal

[22] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 38. Scott spoke highly of Parker in his autobiography. "Our hearts were united as the hearts of David and Jonathan," he recalled in reference to the biblical figures.
[23] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 38.
[24] Because Elijah Hedding presided over the conference and likely would have prevented them from passing resolutions, the decision should be seen partly through a strategic lens. Abolition Methodists had little to gain by forcing the issue. Yet their decision to not even attempt to pass them suggests a willingness to be somewhat more patient on the subject than they had been in the previous year.
[25] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 38.

that would inevitably lead converts to labor for a more just society. Conversion was a necessary ingredient in abolitionism because religious people were natural abolitionists.

While promoting religious conversion, Scott took a brief sabbatical from his antislavery writing. That did not ultimately harm the abolition Methodists because the *Zion's Herald*, even with the Springfield Conference forcing a change in the editor chair, remained a place for continued discussion of slavery and abolition. There were still abolition Methodists ready to continue the debate that Scott had begun. Moreover, the *Zion's Watchman*, an abolition Methodist newspaper published by La Roy Sunderland in New York City, further helped fill the void.[26] With the continued antislavery agitation in the hands of men like Horton and Sunderland, Scott turned his attention to religious evangelization and grassroots antislavery agitation.

Before he began his work in Lowell in earnest, Scott first attended a camp meeting in Eastham, Massachusetts, a town situated on Cape Cod, and served as secretary. The event was a spectacle, bringing two presiding elders, established ministers, and rising stars together. These were also people who had touched Scott's life in the past and would continue to shape it in the years that followed. They came from both sides of the abolition question. They included Bartholomew Otheman, presiding elder of the Boston District and the man who delivered the funeral sermon for Amey Scott; Abel Stevens, a recently ordained anti-abolitionist and future editor of the *Zion's Herald*; antislavery preacher F.P. Tracy of Boston; and, most significantly, Timothy Merritt, a former editor of the *Christian Advocate* who had just been transferred to the New England Conference. Scott was greatly impressed with the event, reporting to the *Zion's Herald* that he believed it was "one of the *best* I ever attended" and, when accounting for the

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[26] The *Zion's Herald* continued to publish decidedly anti-slavery news. For an example of an anti-slavery article published in the *Herald* during the fall, see Benjamin Shaw, "For Zion's Herald.," *Zion's Herald*, November 9, 1836, vol. 7, no. 45, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

number of attendees, it was "one of the *greatest*."[27] Offering a window into his own preaching style, Scott praised the opening sermon for its "three excellences": its short length, its "good feeling," and its appropriateness.[28] This characterization of the ideal sermon reflected the same practices seen during Scott's earlier years as stationed minister and presiding elder.

Scott's broad observations of the meeting were effusive, and they further embodied his general perspective on the purpose of camp meetings. He praised Daniel Webb, the presiding elder of New Bedford District, for having "managed the meeting well" by ably handling the logistics.[29] If he had one criticism of the meeting, it was that the stationed preacher needed to ensure that goods could be transported to Eastham "on reasonable terms," but he quickly clarified that he believed such a problem could "easily be regulated in the future." Two factors that Scott singled out for praise are especially worthy of notice: that the meeting was attended to with "deep solemnity" and characterized by daily sessions of "Family prayer." In particular, he favorably recorded, "I scarcely saw so much as a smile on the countenance of any spectator during any of the public prayer meetings."[30] As seen, Scott had long emphasized the duality of religious faith as being balanced by poles of despair and hope. Joy and hope could only flow from solemnity. The transformative power of religion, then, began with leading people to realize their faults and culminated with the joy of being reborn. Religion, for Scott, was not merely something that helped make someone a better person; it was a prerequisite for that. His

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[27] Scott went so far as to boast that this event was "decidedly the largest ever held on the Cape." He estimated that there were at least one thousand attendees spread across the twenty-five "very large" tents that covered the ground. The meeting ran five days, from Wednesday, August 24 through Sunday, August 29.

[28] O. Scott, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham.," *Zion's Herald*, September 14, 1836, vol. 7, no. 37, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

[29] Scott noted that the meeting was kept safe from "disturbance" and that "Our meals were taken with an unprecedented exactness" that left more time to worship.

[30] Scott, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham.," 3.

observations of the camp meeting, then, show the ways that his own religious ministry remained largely unchanged since the 1820s.

Although Scott concerned himself with reporting facts as they occurred, he nevertheless strayed into editorialization at one crucial juncture. When describing the sermon from "brother [Samuel] Snowden," an African American who spoke on the evening of the opening day, Scott made a pointed comment: "No one who listened to this brother..., can doubt, but the Africans, as our colored *Americans* are commonly called, have some intellect."[31] Scott, however, was equally effusive of many of the anti-abolitionists. For example, he praised Merritt's "very practical and profitable sermon" on Thursday morning and described Stevens' sermon that afternoon as being of "great feeling and power" before partly attributing religious conversations that day to him. On the final day of the meeting, Scott again praised Stevens by noting that his closing sermon resulted in twenty conversions on the spot: about a quarter of the total that took place during the entire event. For his part, however, Scott himself performed nearly as well as Stevens during the Saturday session, delivering an exhortation that produced twelve converts.[32]

One of the camp meeting's greatest consequences, however, came from a series of meetings by the preachers in attendance. While at Eastham, the ministers unanimously resolved

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[31] Scott's decision to italicize Americans for emphasis in reference to African Americans is noteworthy because it underscores his continued insistence that African Americans were as American as their white counterparts. For another account of this camp-meeting, see B.F. Lambord, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham.," *Zion's Herald*, September 14, 1836, vol. 7, no. 37, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022). Although unofficial, Lambord's account reinforces Scott's observations, including his overall characterization: "I think it the most interesting and glorious I ever witnessed." Lambord also singled out "brother Snowden" for praise, and even offered more specifics of the sermon that Scott had praised. Snowden accepted the premise of religion's critics that it was "deception" but he did so to present "a beautiful, sacred, cutting irony" that religion "deceives the man who is in the road to hell, by calling him back into the path of heaven." Lambord, however, was hesitant to offer more than a sketch of Snowden's sermon because he believed it lost its "beauty and effect" when handled by his "unworthy pen." He likened Snowden's theological takedown of "infidelity" to John Wesley himself. What Scott had implied, Lambord ultimately made explicit: the "colored brethren" were an example of Christian conduct that should be imitated by "their white brethren."

[32] Scott, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham.," 3.

to purchase land that could "accommodate a camp-meeting every year till the Millennium!"[33] They immediately set up a committee to handle the logistics and raised the funds during the event that allowed them to buy most of the land and the required lumber "on the spot." This site, Scott recalled, was named by E.T. Taylor of Boston's Mariner's Church: "*MILLENIUM GROVE*."[34]

Upon returning to Lowell, Scott turned his attention to evangelizing and eventually abolitionizing the town's Methodist community. Before and immediately after the Eastham camp meeting, he observed that there had been "a revival in the church" that had resulted in about twenty-five new converts. During the opening weeks of September, however, he capitalized on this burgeoning momentum by organizing a Four Days' Meeting that he believed marked a turning point for the Methodists in Lowell. The camp meeting won Scott's church over fifty converts, and he reported that "scores, if not hundreds, are now under deep awakening." In the aftermath of the camp meeting, he observed that religious services were far better attended than they had ever been. Evening services were "overflowing" and three consecutive days in mid-September resulted in groups "from 80 to 125 [coming] forward for prayers." At the climax of this revival fervor, Scott reported that on September 16, 1836, there were hundreds who departed because there was not enough room to fit them in church. "Every nook and corner was covered," he said of these services in his autobiography.[35] "I have never seen any thing exceed this," he added, commenting that his first year in Springfield was the only thing that "most nearly resembles it."[36] This comparison with his earlier revival was not a passing mention, as Scott

[33] Bartholomew Otheman, quoted in, Scott, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham.," 3.
[34] Scott, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham.," 3.
[35] Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 39
[36] O. Scott, "Good News from Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, September 21, 1836, vol. 7, no. 38, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022). Scott was at his best when serving as a stationed minister, evidenced by his tenure at Springfield, Massachusetts and Lowell, Massachusetts. This suggests that his demotion

even incorporated techniques he had first used in Springfield and perfected them on his new station. For example, he used love-feasts to secure quick conversions by having a large group of participants speak in quick succession. At Springfield, he got 120 people to speak in fifty minutes; at Lowell, the numbers swelled to 180 people in an hour. This action promoted the emotive impulsive revivalism that characterized his ministry. The Springfield had been wildly successful, but Scott argued that his September love-feast in Lowell, which he oversaw in the absence of his presiding elder, had surpassed the one in Springfield with twenty-five of the 180 speakers converting "on the spot."[37]

The mid-September Four Days' Meeting and love-feast transformed the Methodist community of Lowell. Not only did they add new members to the church; existing members became more devoted and diligent. "Our class-meetings and prayer-meetings since," Scott reported, "have been very interesting." He was eminently aware, however, that the Springfield revival had been relatively short lived, dying down and plateauing during the middle of autumn. Confessing he was not sure whether this revival would be "*a mighty shower*" or "a long, steady, powerful rain," he knew one thing with certainty: "I however, firmly believe, that the flame will spread, till hundreds are converted!"[38] His observations of the revival in Lowell underscores a crucial point: they might have added a hundred members to the church in Lowell, but "we feel

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from the office of presiding elder may not have been *entirely* politically motivated, given that the church returned Scott to his most effective position and offered him a station where he could evangelize for the church.

[37] O. Scott, "Farther from Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, September 28, 1836, vol. 7, no. 39, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022). Scott also relayed some of these same details in a letter to the *Zion's Watchman*, which was also picked up and touted by the *New York Evangelist*. This account repeats many of the same details in the letter to the *Herald*. See O. Scott, "Revival in Lowell, Mass.," *New York Evangelist*, October 1, 1836, vol. 7, no. 40, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[38] Scott, "Farther from Lowell.," 3.

that the work has just commenced!"[39] In Scott's view, there were still many more who could be converted to Christianity and, as we will see, the church still needed to be abolitionized.

In the end, the revival was more akin to the "shower" rather than a "rain." Where the Springfield revival was largely over by the end of September, the revival in Lowell continued into early October. On October 3, he reported, "It [the work of God] is still going forward" and cited the 48 received on probation during evening services on October 1 and the "Sixty or seventy" who went forward for prayers on October 2 as evidence of the revival's continued success.[40] Nevertheless, external challenges soon forced this revival to an abrupt standstill and threw Lowell, which was heavily reliant on textile manufacturing, into chaos.

Given its status as an emerging manufacturing town – a place which he favorably touted on one occasion as "the great Manchester of America" – Scott naturally relayed his thoughts on the circumstances of working in a burgeoning industrial community with a large employed female population.[41] "The girls here," he wrote, "to the number of about 1000, had a 'turn out' day [on October 1], in consequence of the raising of the price of board – which extra sum they thought the companies ought to pay."[42] This episode, as one of the few public statements by Orange Scott on industrialization, capitalism, and labor issues, offers some limited insight into his views on those topics. Although Scott held economically populist attitudes and believed that employers should care for their employees with better wages and working conditions, he did not regard economics as a paramount issue.

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[39] O. Scott, "Good News from Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, September 21, 1836, vol. 7, no. 38, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022).
[40] O. Scott, "Farther from Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, October 5, 1836, vol. 7, no. 40, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022).
[41] O. Scott, "Revival in Lowell, Mass.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, November 25, 1836, vol. 11, no. 14, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022). In this postmortem report for the *Christian Advocate*, Scott invoked the phrase "the great Manchester of America" and noted that half of its citizens were involved in cotton and wool manufacturing.
[42] Scott, "Farther from Lowell.," October 5, 1836, 3

As seen previously, Scott deprecated materialism as being ill-suited to promote happiness because he believed humans were fundamentally spiritual beings. Only by spiritual renewal could material conditions be improved. Like a Wilberforce, Scott did not believe labor activism or economic policy could solve problems with industrialization. This view is best seen by his reaction to the protests of the young women at Lowell and the conduct of employers. "We have feared that this circumstance might retard the work of God," he wrote, but added that the situation provided an opportunity for good to come. "As hundreds are now at liberty," he wrote of the religious opportunity in such economic tensions, "we have appointed another *Protracted Meeting*, to commence this evening [October 3]."[43]

In some respects, Scott's desire for a religious meeting had been to promote harmony at a contentious juncture. In a report to the *Zion's Herald* cowritten by Scott and Parker a few days after they announced their plans for a protracted meeting, they lamented that poor weather, a lack of notice, and protests brought the Lowell revivals to a standstill. Scott and Parker's summation of what they termed "the contest between the manufacturers and operatives" is nevertheless illustrative of Scott's economic views.[44] In their telling of this labor dispute, Scott and Parker underscored their belief that spirituality trumped economics by describing the "'bone of contention'" between the two groups as being "comparatively a small one." Nevertheless, they both sympathized with the "girls" and fell more on their side of the dispute. This was not done out of a kneejerk support for laborers over capitalists because, as the two ministers noted, the only issue that mattered was the "principle" that the employers were on the wrong side of a

[43] Scott, "Father from Lowell.," October 5, 1836, 3.
[44] O. Scott, "Revival at Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, October 12, 1836, vol. 7, no. 41, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022).

contractual dispute.[45] This led Scott and Parker to conclude that the "turn out" had greatly hurt the manufacturers and would therefore "be a lesson for agents" to better respect "the rights of the girls" in the future. In that sense, they concluded that "the 'turn out' will have this good effect, to say the least." It is important to note that Scott and Parker did not support the young women's protest out of a belief that mass protests were inherently desirable and they did not advocate protesting to get higher wages or new benefits. They sympathized with the protest on the far narrower basis of employees protecting their contractual benefits. In that sense, Scott's economic support for workers stemmed not from economic radicalism but support for contract rights. La Roy Sunderland, however, cited the episode as evidence that northern capitalism was preferable to plantation slavery.[46] Scott and Parker, however, saw the episode in a largely unfavorable light, concluding their report by hoping "the Lord would overrule this whole affair, for good."[47] It was an unpleasant distraction from conversion, not a template for future action.

By the middle of October, the dispute between laborers and employers had begun to die down. Despite his measured sympathy for the employees, Scott still saw this "excitement and convulsion" as a diversion from his ministry. He continued to believe that his revival had

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[45] In Scott and Parker's telling, the young women had agreed to pay $1.25 for board. However, this price was raised in the months before the "turn out" by 12 ½ cents without a corresponding wage increase, which the women regarded as a contract violation since business was doing well. Scott and Parker sympathized with their plight.
[46] Scott, "Father from Lowell.," October 5, 1836, 3. "Tyranny of the Spindle.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 2, 1836, vol. 1, no. 44, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Sunderland cited the Lowell episode and directly quoted Scott and Parker's account to rebut a proslavery minister's argument about "the tyranny of the spindle." In Sunderland's view, the conditions of the "female operatives at Lowell" could not be compared to the abuses that slaves faced.
[47] Scott, "Father from Lowell.," October 5, 1836, 3. In a letter to the *Zion's Herald* a week later, Scott reported that he had "given certificates to about sixty or seventy members of our church." These certificates were for employees who planned to leave Lowell until the dispute had been resolved. This represents the only instance of tangible support that Scott lent to the protesters. In his view, the women won the dispute. He observed that "the agents have rescinded the new regulation [the changes to the price of board]" and were open to giving the women a wage increase. He believed wage increases would naturally come after Lowell became "calm" since economic circumstances warranted it. He again reiterated the belief he and Parker had shared in their earlier report: "The companies and agents will be more careful in the future, and the rights of the operatives will be more secure." See O. Scott, "Affairs at Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, October 19, 1836, vol. 7, no. 42, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022).

maintained some of its momentum even if the incident in October had stymied it. Although the number coming forward for prayers on October 9 was 50% lower than it had been on October 2, it still amounted to "About thirty or thirty-five." While Scott continued to make inroads by adding new people to the church, these numbers could not compensate for those leaving because of the disruptions in Lowell. As Scott reported to the *Christian Advocate* in November, the controversy had led to about 2,000 people leaving the city. Many of them were members of the Methodist community and Scott specifically lamented the loss of "young converts, serious persons."[48] This assertion, it should be noted, suggests that Scott had deliberately targeted the young men and women in Lowell as part of his ministry.

These struggles, however, did not go completely unnoticed by some outside observers. Thomas Whittemore, Orange Scott's Universalist opponent from the 1820s, inserted an article in *Trumpet* that mocked the stagnant revival. The author of the article, signed as "L.R.P.," took aim at Scott's invocation that the revival was "the work of God." In light of the setbacks which the "turn out" had produced, L.R.P. asked, "Will he [Scott] still call this the work of God, or will he allow it to be a device of man?" Citing Gamaliel's speech from Acts 5:34-38, the article ended with a direct insinuation that the poor weather that foiled Scott's protracted meeting in early October was proof that his revival was "a device of man" rather than a blessing "of God."[49]

Despite the *Trumpet's* enthusiastic prognosis of failure, Scott was largely satisfied with the state of his church in Lowell a month after the labor dispute came to an end. He bragged to the *Christian Advocate* in November that they had been able to maintain a number of "twenty to

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[48] Scott, "Affairs at Lowell.," 2. O. Scott, "Revival in Lowell, Mass.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, November 25, 1836, vol. 11, no. 14, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022).

[49] L.R.P., "Revival at Lowell.," *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, October 22, 1836, vol. 9, no. 18, p. 70, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed October 27, 2022). L.R.P.'s article underscored some of the same themes which Scott and Whittemore had debated nearly a decade earlier, since L.R.P. worked under the assumption that the weather was under God's "exclusive control." This rhetoric echoes the fundamental point of contention between Whittemore's Universalism and Scott's Methodism: the nature of God's justice in the present world.

forty" coming forward for prayers every Sunday. "Our houses are now well filled," he added, touting that "Six or eight" had joined the Methodist community in Lowell in early November. These figures show an undeniable decline in the rate of growth, but one that largely stabilized by the middle to end of October. In that sense, the revival in Lowell ended just like the revival in Springfield: at a plateau rather than a cliff.

If the assignment in Lowell had been an effort by Elijah Hedding to undermine Orange Scott's abolitionism, then he miscalculated. Scott might have taken a backseat in the antislavery struggle during parts of the second half of 1836, but he also planted evangelical seeds which would soon bear antislavery fruit. The anti-abolition Methodists put him into a Methodist community that came to love him and consider him their principal religious leader. As will be seen later, Lowell Methodists became quintessential Scottite Methodists, both in theology and abolitionism. They would play a major part in the coming schism over slavery and church government. That was only possible because of the Methodist Episcopal Church's desire to stifle Scott's agitation on slavery in 1836. And in trying to accomplish that end, the anti-abolition hierarchy had set in motion a series of events that would greatly undermine their authority in the New England Conference and beyond.

Although religious revivals dominated Scott's time during the fall of 1836, he did not totally detach himself from the antislavery movement. On October 5, 1836, during the labor crisis and revival challenges, he attended the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society in the town and opened the morning and evening proceedings with prayer. He did not, however, simply oversee the proceedings; he actively participated in them. During the afternoon session, eleven of the twelve resolutions which a committee had drafted during the morning came up for a vote and passed without much fanfare. The twelfth resolution, however, proved far more controversial. It

condemned the American Colonization Society as being "unrighteous, unnatural, and proscriptive" and "a fraud" that "deserves the severest reprobation." The resolution on colonization proved far more difficult to pass and was postponed until the evening session. It only passed after "some remarks" by Orange Scott and two other speakers.[50]

That fall, on August 19, September 21, and November 15, Scott penned open letters to Elijah Hedding that would become the cornerstone of his effort to challenge Hedding's brand of anti-abolition Methodism. This controversy left a lasting impression on him. Hedding's conduct as presiding bishop of the Springfield Conference of 1836 and his subsequent actions hardened Scott's opposition to ecclesiastical authority. To Scott, Hedding's desire to meddle in the affairs of the New England Conference by bolstering the anti-abolition minority were a direct assault on the rights of the annual conference's majority. Scott argued that his actions at the conference – Hedding's insistence that he could and should have prevented the reading of Horton's antislavery resolutions, for instance – were examples of him "over-stepping" his "constitutional rights."[51] Scott understood the role of the bishop as helping the annual conferences facilitate their operations: they did not have the authority to unilaterally determine "*what* business they will do, and *when* they will do it," especially when those matters were sanctioned by the Church Discipline. He likened those episcopal actions to Catholicism.[52] Scott's resentment of Hedding, however, rested on a general frustration with the anti-abolition Methodists and stemmed from his belief that they had misrepresented abolitionists as "heretics" and "fanatics" when they were

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[50] "Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, October 15, 1836, vol. 6, no. 42, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[51] As Scott said in his second letter, he believed his struggle with Hedding was not a personal matter but something which "deeply concerns our whole connection."

[52] O. Scott, "Letter to Rev. Bishop Hedding.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 31, 1836, vol. 1, no. 35, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Because the Church Discipline condemned slavery, Scott believed that the annual conferences were allowed pass antislavery resolutions. Scott's second letter from November, which was far shorter, largely clarified terms and statements which he believed had been misunderstood.

simply “brethren” entitled to speak their minds on slavery. While Scott publicly endorsed Hedding as bishop, he offered a qualifier that reflected his state of mind in 1836 and would foreshadow his future actions. “We are Episcopal Methodists,” he admitted, but combined this profession of loyalty with a warning. “We mean to live and die in the M.E. Church, unless we are persecuted and driven out of it. – But we will not be oppressed and deprived of our rights by one man, or a minority!”[53]

Although the Springfield Conference had seemingly established a compromise between the anti-abolition and abolition Methodists, Orange Scott grew increasingly frustrated with what he viewed as the one-sided nature of that arrangement. In an article for the *Zion's Watchman* published on October 26, 1836, Scott relayed an anecdotal story about a member of the New England Conference who had been shunned by a nominally abolitionist minister. The minister, in Scott's telling, vacillated on the issue of slavery because his congregation was composed of anti-abolitionists. “This brother professes to be an abolitionist now,” Scott wrote, “but he gives up his rights and conscience to the people ‘for the sake of peace.’” Although this minister was an extreme case, Scott noted that abolition Methodists across the New England Conference had made that same mistake even if they did not exhibit “such a time-serving spirit.” “In doing this,” he continued, “he [the minister] carries out the principles adopted by the N.E. Conference, at its

[53] O. Scott, “Letter to Bishop Hedding.,” *Zion's Watchman*, December 7, 1836, vol. 1, no. 49. Scott ended his letter with a postscript that declared that “we all respect Bishop Hedding in the New England Conference,” and praised his overall tenure as a bishop. Scott would later walk some of the allegations he had directed against Hedding in June 1837, including his claim that Hedding showed “disdain” at the Cincinnati General Conference and his allegation that Hedding had removed him from his position as presiding elder exclusively over abolitionism. However, despite this retraction, the overarching tone of the Springfield Conference nevertheless played some role in Scott's thinking, given that the theme of the conference was compromise. Moreover, Scott made these retractions during a contentious annual conference in Nantucket. See O. Scott, “Corrections.” and O. Scott, “Letters to Bishop Hedding.,” *Zion's Watchman*, July 1, 1837, vol. 2, no. 78, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

last session."[54] For Scott, abolitionists like the unnamed minister made it impossible to abolish slavery. Ministers, he had repeatedly argued, needed to lead the way on the issue of abolition. They could not shirk that responsibility. "I hope no Christian minister will sell his birth-right and conscience for a morsel of meat," he asserted, concluding with a call for readers of the *Zion's Watchman* that "Now is the time to speak out; and God forbid that we should keep silent 'for the sake of peace.'"[55]

As he became more vocal again in the abolition Methodist movement, Scott increasingly took an interest in Sunderland's *Zion's Watchman*. He had already corresponded with Sunderland for some time, was a subscriber to the publication, and acted as an unofficial agent by getting twenty subscribers for the paper between May and November. On November 11, 1836, he went even further. Because the *Watchman* was struggling to maintain a sustainable subscriber base, Scott urged readers of the paper to financially support it. He believed it was imperative that Sunderland's newspaper survive. Scott felt its location in the New York Conference and its capacity to reach 800 ministers made it an essential contribution to abolition Methodism. It was a "great lamp, in the midst of a populous city and country," he said, praising it because it did the same thing that he had endeavored to do in 1835: "it has opposed sin in high and low places – it has dared to BRAVE public opinion – it has waked up hundreds of

[54] Scott invoked Horton's resolutions, reminding readers that they had opted to withdraw them as a gesture of goodwill to anti-abolition Methodists.
[55] O. Scott, "A Fact.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 26, 1836, vol. 1, no. 43, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott's account here was later endorsed by an anonymous correspondent to the *Zion's Watchman* identified only as "S-------s" from Mansfield, Massachusetts, who forwarded an article from the *Pawtucket Record* of an account that he believed illustrated a "similar" occurrence. See "S------s," "Neglecting Duty," *Zion's Watchman*, December 21, 1836, vol. 1, no. 51, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott seemingly revisited this episode in May, offering a "correction" on material he had written respecting a "Br. Noble" and the church in Ashburnham refusing to pray for slaves. For Scott, praying for their plight – invoking the biblical command to "remember them in bonds" – was the absolute bare minimum that Christians were obligated to do, whether abolitionist or not. See O. Scott, "The 'Correction.,'" *Zion's Herald*, May 17, 1837, vol. 8, no. 20, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

slumbering ministers, and thousands of church members!" Scott announced that he had acquired eighty new subscribers and commitments from twenty existing patrons with pay in advance. He then then challenged readers to find ten new subscribers themselves. "It will live! It MUST live!! IT SHALL live!!!" he wrote, adding, "It SHALL stand on Zion's walls till the great trump of our national jubilee is sounded from Georgia to Maine – till the voice of freedom thunders...."[56]

When La Roy Sunderland posted pledges in that number of the *Zion's Watchman*, Orange Scott's name, alongside his "100 new sub's" was at the top of the list. That number alone nearly equaled the 105 subscribers pledged by the entire New Hampshire Conference. Although those numbers certainly played a crucial role in setting the *Zion's Watchman* on more stable footing, Sunderland did not want readers to grow complacent. "Time is short," he urged readers, "what you do, must be done quickly."[57] This appeal, however, was at first met with mixed results. A month later, in the final number of the first volume of the *Zion's Watchman*, Scott once again took to the paper to endorse it. In doing so, he championed an important message that continued to characterize his brand of evangelization and abolitionism: personal agency. The paper would only live, he argued, if the people stopped being "inactive." He made this point explicit early in the article: "Don't wait to see whether the Watchman lives or dies – *make it live*!" He challenged those ministers who he likened to the soldier that waited to "gird on the armor" until the battle had already been won. For Scott, a person's actions should not be based on popularity or other people's conduct. "Wait not to see whether others are going to do any thing before you act," he reproached the ministers who had yet to furnish the paper with new subscribers, adding, "but do

[56] O. Scott, "The Watchman Shall Live!," *Zion's Watchman*, November 30, 1836, vol. 1, no. 48, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[57] "Pledges.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 30, 1836, vol. 1, no. 48, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

your duty, and do it NOW."[58] Scott, who was not content to merely abolitionize New England Methodists, wanted the newspaper to survive in order to gain a foothold for abolition Methodism in the mid-Atlantic states and even the Northwest. Abolition Methodists already had the infrastructure to accomplish these goals in the *Zion's Watchman*; the survival or death of the paper would be a test to determine if abolitionism could expand to other regions of the United States or if it would remain a regional anomaly in an anti-abolition church.

Although he focused more on evangelization, Scott continued to champion abolitionism publicly. In his autobiography, he recalled incorporating abolitionism into his ministry but doing so in a secondary capacity: they prayed for enslaved Americans during worship, and he would "occasionally" preach on the topic.[59] Scott always prioritized his Christian identity ahead of all other identities, including abolitionism. Moreover, given his belief that abolitionism stemmed from Christianity, he believed that evangelization preceded abolition. After the revival in October, he once again turned his attention back to antislavery activities in November and December 1836. On November 12, 1836, a day after he appealed to the *Zion's Watchman* subscribers to save their paper, he wrote to the *Zion's Herald* to excoriate the New York Conference for its "*unconstitutional*, and *Anti-Methodistical*" conduct. The conference, which had adopted a resolution barring anyone from becoming a deacon or elder unless they pledged to be silent on the issue of slavery, reinforced how "unlike" the church was and how much it differed from "the days of Wesley, of Coke, and Asbury" and "the doings of our Conferences only thirty-five years ago!" Echoing his earlier articles, he once again likened his antislavery

[58] O. Scott, "To All the True Friends of Zion's Watchman.," *Zion's Watchman*, December 28, 1836, vol. 1, no. 52, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). La Roy Sunderland endorsed Scott's appeal and its tone, asserting that he found it "*directly to the point!*" Nevertheless, he was optimistic about the future of the *Watchman* even if "there is much to be done yet." Sunderland, however, furnished readers with the reasoning behind Scott's appeal: the *Watchman's* first year in 1836 had largely been sustained by donations, but it would not receive that same financial support during a hypothetical second year.
[59] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 39.

agitation to Martin Luther and the Apostles of Jesus Christ. For Scott, abolitionism was conservative and restorative in the sense that it sought to conserve old ideas and restore the initial standard of the Methodist Episcopal Church. But Scott did not stop there; he declared war on the idea of church harmony itself. "Let the question of right and wrong first be settled," he wrote, adding that, "if the peace of the church is inconsistent with a *firm* and *decided* opposition to ALL SIN, *it ought to be disturbed*!"[60] For Scott, then, abolition agitators were not a curse upon the church but a "blessing" to it. He instead saw efforts to stifle agitation as an assault upon the consciences of ministers and amounted to forcing abolitionists to "swear an eternal allegiance to the baptized monster." For Scott, however, the anti-abolition Methodists of the free states had not even secured the peace they hoped a sacrifice of principle would protect. "At the expense of almost sacrificing some of their brethren," Scott declared that they had, as a "reward," still received threats of disunion and schism from southerners such as William A. Smith.[61]

A few weeks later, Scott again wrote to the *Zion's Herald* to discuss the declining numbers of Methodists in the United States. Given the religious culture of 1830s America, a decline of membership two years in a row seemed illogical. Scott, however, assured readers that he knew the cause of the decline. "Our church is on the retrograde march," he asserted, observing that the church had favored sectional interests and mistakenly attributed the decrease in membership to "small matters and secondary things" instead of "the principal cause." The problem was obvious: "There are Achans among us, a thousand times worse than Achan of old." Achan, an Irsaelite who pillaged God's property, was a logical comparison. Where Achan had merely plundered "temporal things" – gold, silver, and clothing – these modern Achans had

[60] Scott also reiterated his early definition of abolitionism: "It is this: slavery is a sin – i.e. the principle that one man can hold another as property, is sinful under all circumstances and ought to be IMMEDIATELY ABANDONED."
[61] O. Scott, "Resolutions of the N. York Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, November 23, 1836, vol. 7, no. 47, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

"robbed [God] of his own image" and "made merchandise of immortal spirits." But here Scott used an important word: "we." For Scott, the sin of slavery was not simply an issue confined to the antebellum South or southern Methodists. Northerners, anti-abolitionists, and the Methodist Episcopal Church also shared culpability because they apologized for the institution and stifled discussion of it. Believing that churches could only prosper if they were attuned with the will of God, Scott believed that the answer to the decline in membership was simple. "I am not surprised that God has suffered destruction, or that a blasting mildew rests upon many parts of our work," he concluded, warning that "heavier thunderbolts" were in "reserve" if the church did not "repent."[62] This embodied a worldview that transcended the denominational pride that initially characterized components of Scott's earlier, pre-abolition ministry.

This letter was a direct response to a speech Wilbur Fisk made while in Great Britain that had just reached the United States. In his address to the British Wesleyans, Fisk attributed the decline in church membership to the rancor of American politics and abolitionism, which, although depicted as two distinct issues, were implicitly connected because Fisk organized his remarks so that a discussion of politics flowed into abolitionism. Nevertheless, Fisk prefaced his speech with a declaration that he believed slavery was evil and reassured his generally antislavery audience that there was no such thing as "a pro-slavery party" in the American church.[63] Scott, however, rejected Fisk's suggestion that abolitionism was the cause of the decline. God was the cause of the decline, and he had cursed the Methodist Episcopal Church because it had strayed from its established purpose as an inculcator of moral virtue. The decline

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[62] O. Scott, "Decrease of Members in the Methodist Episcopal Church.," *Zion's Herald*, December 7, 1836, vol. 7, no. 49, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott wrote that, "Our church is stained with *blood*, and haunted with the groans of *deathless* spirits! Surely, it is enough. God's judgment will not always linger, nor his justice forever sleep."
[63] "The Wesleyan Conference. Dr. Fisk's Address before the Wesleyan Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, September 21, 1836, vol. 7, no. 38, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022)

in membership could not be attributed to abolitionism because abolition conferences – New England and New Hampshire – had enjoyed a growth in membership during the same timeframe when overall membership had declined. The New England Conference alone had experienced a net gain of 2,241 members. Meanwhile, conferences that had passed anti-abolition resolutions – Maine, Baltimore, and Philadelphia – had lost thousands of members. For Scott, there was a clear juxtaposition: "*Dr. Fisk and others vs. facts. Anti-abolition, alias, pro-slavery measures vs. Revivals!*"[64] Citing his own experiences in Lowell, he argued that he had successfully converted hundreds despite his antislavery views. This led Scott to arrive at a straightforward conclusion: the problem was not over a general loss of membership, but "a decrease in most of the slaveholding Conference...." Referencing John Adams, Scott concluded his analysis bluntly: "FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS."[65]

December 1836 brought a major shakeup for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Timothy Merritt, a former editor of the *Christian Advocate* from the New York Conference, wrote a public letter to his former co-editor, Nathan Bangs, to announce his break with the northern anti-abolition consensus. Merritt, who had been transferred to New England at the New York annual conference during the summer, felt he had to make his views on slavery and abolition public. Slavery, Merritt explained, was "a sin, a great sin" and circumstances were irrelevant because it was an inherently violent, oppressive, and unchristian institution. But he went further than merely condemning slavery. He cast his lot with the abolitionists. Although he agreed that

[64] A minister later challenged Scott's claim that the church had declined in membership during the 1834-1835 conference year and argued that the official figures had been incorrect by anywhere from "17,000 to 20,000!" Although Scott admitted he could have been mistaken, he cited the article in the *Christian Advocate* from July 1835 on which he based his numbers. This, however, did not change his overall point: "there are twelve, out of our former twenty-two Annual Conferences, who have fewer members now than they had two years ago..." See O. Scott, "Decrease of Members in the Methodist Episcopal Church.," *Zion's Herald*, December 28, 1836, vol. 7, no. 52, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[65] O. Scott, "Decrease of Members in the Methodist Episcopal Church.," *Zion's Herald*, December 7, 1836, vol. 7, no. 49, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

abolitionists had acted in ways he could not approve, he also said he could not condemn them. "I regard them [the controversial actions] as the imprudence of good men," he wrote, adding that he considered them "men engaged in a great and good cause, ..." To Merritt, the only thing that mattered were the principles at stake. "Their object is the abolition of slavery; and that should be our object," he wrote. In some respects, he championed a form of ecclesiastical harmony between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists in the free states. But rather than anti-abolition unity, this was a unity built upon mutual understanding and a shared hatred for slavery. Merritt felt he could not condemn the abolitionist actions that he deemed to be extreme because he shared their overarching principles. "There are two sides, and only two sides in this cause," he observed, noting that there could be no "medium" between "either abolition, or slavery."[66]

Two days after Merritt's article appeared in the *Zion's Herald*, Orange Scott wrote a communication to the newspaper to tout the movement's newest convert. Having felt "great pleasure" upon learning of Merritt's abolitionism, he told readers that if more ministers acted as Merritt then the Cincinnati Conference would have ended differently. While he and Merritt may have disagreed on specific points, Scott nevertheless asserted, "Our venerable father in the gospel, is right in the *main* – he is on the rock." In Scott's view, Merritt and the abolition Methodists were not so different. "He [Merritt] is as much an abolitionist as I was two years ago – and as much as GERRITT SMITH, Esq. ... was one year ago." Scott's praise of Merritt, however, offers a window into his conception of antislavery unity, which rested on how he defined abolitionism. To prove that Merritt was an abolitionist, Scott quoted Merritt's article as identifying slavery as a sin and declaring his to opposition its underlying principles. Merritt had further expressed a belief that chattel slavery should be immediately abolished. For Scott, that

[66] T. Merritt, "To the Rev. N. Bangs, D.D.," *Zion's Herald*, December 21, 1836, vol. 7, no. 51, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

made one an abolitionist. They agreed on the fundamental question at stake: slavery was a sin in all circumstances. Merritt, then, had embraced "The *germ* of immediate emancipation," and Scott therefore asserted that he would "heartily welcome him to the Anti-Slavery ranks."[67] His envisioned antislavery movement was an inclusive moral crusade that brought people of different backgrounds, beliefs, and attitudes together in the common cause to oppose what they each believed to be a sin. This conception of unity, which Scott adopted inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church, would be crucial in the years that followed.

Scott did not limit his activities to religious events or newspaper articles. He also conducted a fall and winter tour, traveling across Massachusetts at breakneck pace to deliver speeches at Ashburnham, Princeton, Salem, Danvers, Springfield, Natick, and Millbury. At Springfield he lectured four days in a row to what he identified as "full congregations." Scott's lectures usually lasted anywhere from an hour and a half to two hours and often ended with him helping establish anti-slavery societies. The content of these lectures largely reiterated ideas that he had already established. His lectures, however, presented the main points of his worldview to audiences across New England. He defined slavery and immediate emancipation, gave reasons for discussing the subject, and then conducted with a question-and-answer segment in which he responded to objections. He also distributed anti-slavery literature before departing.[68]

Orange Scott's journey to Harvard, like his Worcester lecture in 1835, proved to be the most memorable and noteworthy visit on his tour across Massachusetts. On December 15, 1836,

[67] O. Scott, "Rev. Timothy Merritt An Abolitionist!," *Zion's Herald*, December 28, 1836, vol. 7, no. 52, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[68] O. Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," *Liberator*, January 2, 1837, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). O. Scott, "Letter from Rev. O. Scott," *Friend of Man*, January 19, 1837, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). In a letter, presumably to H.C. Wright, Scott outlined the time and place of some of these lectures on his fall tour. Scott's lecture in Natick took place on November 8. Scott's lectures in Springfield were in Willimansett and Chicopee Factory Village to the north from November 19-22. Scott departed Springfield to then lecture in Middlebury on November 24.

Scott arrived to deliver an evening address at Harvard at the Unitarian meeting house. However, he arrived two hours before the lecture was supposed to begin only to find out that the Unitarian society had withdrawn their invitation out of a fear that his lecture would divide their community. Anticipating that result, Scott's allies in Harvard took the initiative and acquired an alternate venue. Upon arriving at the scene to find an entirely filled hall, Scott identified a group of "perhaps twenty men and boys" who refused to take their seats and kept their hats on.[69] The lack of decorum seemed to aggravate Scott, since he brought up the hats a second time in his recollection by pointedly noting that they refused to do so even for opening prayer.

The scene quickly devolved into a heckling session. One protester, who Scott identified as Jacob Whitney, interrupted to ask Scott why he didn't go to the South. When Scott tried to answer the question, Whitney reportedly talked over him by insisting that Scott's speech was disruptive and unwanted. Another person named Rowe, whom Scott suggested was under the influence of alcohol, insisted that they were saving the Union and the Constitution. Other hecklers soon joined Whitney and Rowe. The situation further spiraled out of control when people who had come to listen to Scott's lecture began confronting the protesters. Hoping to defuse the situation, Scott offered a compromise: if the hecklers would let him finish his lecture, he would let them ask him any questions they wanted for an hour. They refused. "The three-fold spirit of *slavery*, rum, and the *devil*, was evidently in many of them," Scott observed, "and they were enraged and excited almost to insanity." The hecklers interrupted him by hissing, stamping their feet, and talking over him with objections and questions.[70]

[69] Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," 4. Scott spoke twice at Princeton and Salem and four times in Springfield.
[70] Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," 4. Scott's exact words about Rowe were that he "is not a stranger to the joys growing out of artificial stimulus...."

Scott continued to deliver his remarks. When he spoke of being "determined to have the victory," he understood victory as being able to "finish my lecture."[71] This underscores an important thread of Scott's worldview first seen with his conception of the Wheel of Reform. Freedom of speech and its companion liberties were essential to the success of moral reform. It allowed virtue to flow from pulpit to people to politicians. When freedom of speech was imperiled, then, the entire project was threatened. Reform required ministers to defy mobs, speak on unpopular subjects, and make those issues popular. This not only required moral courage; it necessitated a robust culture of free speech. The act of finishing the speech, in that sense, took on an equal or even greater significance to the content itself. Failing to do so sent the message that censorship and intimidation could cripple the march of reform.

The hecklers responded differently to Scott's determination. Whitney, for example, sat down to hear the end of the lecture. Other protesters, led by Rowe, took the opposite course. Angered by Scott's refusal to stop talking, they left to go retrieve what Scott identified as "a cannon." After putting the weapon behind Scott, they eventually fired it but missed their target. "I kept on speaking as though nothing had happened," he noted, adding that the group spent the remainder of his lecture trying unsuccessfully to reload the weapon. Scott then boasted that he concluded his remarks and departed before a second shot was able to go off. Scott, however, did speak with Whitney after delivering his lecture. The lecture had not changed Whitney's opinion, but Scott bragged that he seemed "entirely shorn of his strength."[72]

When recounting the episode at Harvard, Scott singled out the women of the community who had attended his speech. "The ladies who were present, showed an admirable degree of

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[71] Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," 4.
[72] Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," 4.

fortitude and firmness," he observed and touted that "*They all remained with us to the end*."[73] This once again underscores Scott's continued belief that women played a crucial role in the private and public dimensions to the antislavery struggle. As will be discussed in the next two chapters, Scott held traditional views on gender roles but nevertheless accepted and supported women participating in the antislavery movement.

The Harvard episode also allowed Scott an opportunity to discuss something crucial: that many of those seeking to curtail speech were often civil authorities. This introduced an important theme that characterized Scott's support for freedom of speech and his Wheel of Reform. Freedom of speech was the connective tissue that allowed preachers to persuade congregants and the people to persuade politicians. It also required protection by government from extralegal and illegal violence. This added a final dimension to the Wheel of Reform: the role of governments in the process. Government existed to protect the individual liberties that made moral reform possible. Scott wedded this support for freedom of speech to his simultaneously conservative and populist worldview. He deprecated mobs because mobs were a tool which the powerful could exploit. "They [the gentlemen and civil officers] let loose their dogs," he wrote, noting that the people behind the mobs "work behind the curtain" and employed "deluded tools" who could not tell "the Constitution from the Koran."[74]

A few days after the Harvard affair, he further crystallized the populist dimension with a brief communication in *Zion's Herald*. He forwarded a letter from a young preacher that he had met during his presiding elder days in Providence who was living in Virginia and had witnessed slavery firsthand. Scott's analysis is especially significant because he argued that preacher offered a window into the real world of slavery. Scott juxtaposed the "horrible scenes" that were

[73] Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," 4.
[74] Scott, "Pro-Slavery Disturbances in Harvard.," 4.

the product of "human eyes" with the "labored scripture arguments" produced by "doctors of divinity, and presidents of colleges...."[75] This contrast echoes a common theme that ran through Scott's debates: moral truth was simple and the solutions to injustice were generally obvious. In the same way Scott challenged Whittemore's seemingly convoluted theological arguments with a simplistic, self-evident reading of the Bible, Scott arrayed himself against anti-abolitionist intellectuals who developed abstract and chimerical arguments that went against what people could plainly see with their own eyes. Scott's invocation of "doctors of divinity" and "presidents of colleges" was a direct reference to men like Wilbur Fisk. While Fisk cast himself as the conservative, Scott's contrast between experience and theory – the real world and abstract ideas – inverted that narrative. Scott's radicalism on the issue of slavery, as we have seen, was derived from his fundamentally conservative dispositions. He was conserving an ancient antislavery Methodist tradition against modern proslavery tendencies inside the church.

Although Scott and Fisk had become public adversaries, Scott closed out the year by expressing a hope that anti-abolition northern Methodists like Fisk had the capacity for change. In one of his final articles for the year, he ended with a juxtaposition of proslavery southern Methodism and anti-abolition northern Methodism, using an editorial in the *Virginia Conference Sentinel* written by William A. Smith as a springboard for this discussion. Given that Fisk, unlike the proslavery militants, had "virtually renounced his Bible defense of slavery" in Great Britain, Scott announced that he could publicly support Fisk for the office of bishop. Without slavery to

[75] O. Scott, "From Zion's Herald.," *New York Evangelist*, January 21, 1837, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). The *New York Evangelist* picked up Scott's article and promoted it to their readership. Scott would update readers about this young man, identified only as "E.S.," in May. See O. Scott and E.S., "For Zion's Herald.," *Zion's Herald*, vol. 8, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

divide the two men, both shared many religious priorities: pewed churches and promoting theological seminaries, for instance.[76]

Scott's hopes that Fisk would follow a similar trajectory as Timothy Merritt were swiftly dashed. In January 1837, only a few weeks later, Fisk penned a lengthy open letter to Merritt in the *Zion's Herald* to express his disappointment that Merritt had aligned with the abolitionists. But for Fisk, Merritt's support for "the present abolition party" was only part of the problem because Merritt had taken his views to the public. Fisk fretted that Merritt's letter had received support from people who threatened Methodist unity. He had one person in mind. "To make it [the announcement] on such terms," Fisk told Merritt, "has authorized Rev. O. Scott to come out in the next week's paper, exulting in having gained *you* to their cause?" Fisk refused to believe that Merritt had betrayed the anti-abolitionists, at first insisting that he knew Merritt was with them. Nevertheless, he argued that Merritt's lack of clarity had offered abolitionists like Scott the ammunition they needed to establish an "ultra" narrative. Merritt, however, refused to back down and wrote a reply to Fisk in which he bluntly replied, "we shall *agree* to *disagree*."[77]

Scott continued his antislavery activities undeterred by Fisk or other leading Methodist authorities. He inaugurated the new year with a gift to the *Zion's Watchman* of 62 subscribers a

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[76] O. Scott, "W.A. Smith," *Zion's Herald*, January 4, 1837, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

[77] W. Fisk, "To the Rev. Timothy Merritt.," *Zion's Herald*, January 18, 1837, vol. 8, no. 3, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). T. Merritt, "Reply to Dr. Fisk.," *Zion's Herald*, February 8, 1837, vol. 8, no. 6, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Fisk argued near the end of his letter again that abolitionism would "seal the death warrant of our national peace." Although Fisk considered himself a supporter of "old-fashioned abolitionism" in contrast with "modern ultra-abolitionists," he immediately undermined that term by insisting that "the relation of master and slave, may, and does in many cases, exist under such circumstances, as free the master from the just charge of guilt and immorality." These arguments vindicate Scott's complaints that Fisk's brand of anti-abolitionism Methodism did nothing more than defend proslavery Methodism even if Fisk did not necessarily see it that way. His morality of circumstance went against Scott's belief in moral absolutes and opened the door for permissive teaching on slavery.

$100 donation.[78] His financial assistance and public calls for greater patronage helped ensure the newspaper survived into the year 1837 and beyond. In the middle of January, he also hosted an anti-slavery meeting at Lowell jointly held at the Freewill Baptist Church and the Methodist Church. The meeting, which lasted over three hours and was attended by at least two hundred people, resulted in 518 people signing antislavery petitions. These successes led Scott to boast that Lowell's Methodist community, which had been only about 10% abolitionist upon his arrival in the summer "is right, almost to an individual."[79] A few days later, he participated in the Old Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society in Northampton and delivered an address there. He also attended the fifth annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Boston at the end of January. Illustrating Scott's emerging influence within the larger movement, William Lloyd Garrison touted Scott as one of the four explicitly named "prominent friends of the cause" who would be attending that year.[80]

On the evening of January 25, Scott rose in Representatives' Hall after an opening prayer to deliver one of the three speeches scheduled for that evening. He first offered a resolution calling for abolitionists to find hope in their successes and thank God. His speech largely reiterated many of the ideas he had espoused earlier in his antislavery labors, but it nevertheless

[78] "Success – Deserved.," *New York Evangelist*, January 28, 1837, vol. 8, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). The *Evangelist* highlighted Sunderland's importance to the antislavery movement by noting that slaveholders had placed a bounty of $50,000 on that "valuable man."

[79] O. Scott, "Great Anti-Slavery Meeting at Lowell, Mass.," *Liberator*, February 4, 1837, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). In this letter, Scott estimated the membership of the Methodist Church in Lowell was about 800. In a letter to the *Herald*, Scott offered more clarity as to the numbers in Lowell. He estimated a 150 net gain, when one factored in the loss of 80 who left during the "turn out" over their "*just rights*" in October. From this, we can glean that the church in Lowell had about 650 members at the time of Scott's arrival, meaning the church had 65 or fewer abolitionists in July 1836. In essence, Scott added approximately 150 Methodists to the church and 585 to 735 abolitionists to the antislavery movement in the span of 6 months. See O. Scott, "Lowell, Mass.," *New York Evangelists*, February 4, 1837, vol. 8, no. 6, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[80] "Old Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society.," *New England Spectator*, February 8, 1837, issue 18, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). "Notice.," *Liberator*, January 21, 1837, p. 15, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

is important to look at what he said on such an important platform. He believed abolitionism and "anti-slavery doctrines" could all be "summed up in one phrase: *Slavery is a sin*, and must be *immediately abandoned*."[81] Their real enemy was the principle behind the institution. In many respects, most of his speech was directed at some of the moderate reservations raised by antislavery sympathizers: that abolition measures were too strong, their rhetoric was too harsh, and abolitionists were obstinate. Scott defended abolitionism on all three grounds.[82]

He argued that principles lacked any meaning unless connected with the measures. By decoupling antislavery principle from antislavery measures, the nation had allowed slavery to grow unchecked until it had become "a great Oak, which defies the storms of public sentiment – ay, the winds of Heaven too!" Looking to Thomas Jefferson and William Wirt as cautionary tales, Scott praised those "patriots and philanthropists" but lamented that because they had separated their opposition to slavery from meaningful action, they had ultimately enabled the institution. "What has their opposition amounted to?" he asked. Even the British abolitionists would have failed, he noted, had they sacrificed principles for expediency. [83]

Regarding the issue of harsh rhetoric, Scott charted a Garrisonian course. "If truth requires the use of severe language, we are justifiable in using it," he declared. He explicitly cited the examples of Jesus Christ and the early church, the Protestant Reformation, and the Declaration of Independence. Harsh rhetoric, in Scott's view, was essential towards fighting both anti-abolitionism and, more importantly, the underlying principles of slavery. Quoting the Declaration, Scott observed that if the document and its principles were "true" then it was right

[81] Scott made his belief that slavery was their real enemy explicit by telling his audience, "This principle must be abolished." Ending slavery itself was not sufficient if the principles that had created the institution endured.
[82] "Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, February 4, 1837, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[83] "Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.," 2.

to call the slaveholder "a man-stealer and a robber."[84] He further justified strong language on the grounds that it provided moral clarity. "I like to hear things called by their right names," he said, telling listeners that if he were ambushed on a highway, then he would describe the perpetrator as a "robber" regardless of what others thought. And on the subject of obstinacy, he turned to the Bible: "Daniel felt that when his rights and the religion of his God were in danger, then was the time to hold them with a death-grasp." Public opinion was an obstacle to overcome when it was wrong. To hold antislavery "sentiment" was important, but it was not sufficient. Those beliefs and the accompanying worldview had to be supported with the tangible action, the clarity of rhetoric, and the moral courage that made them practicable and attainable.[85]

Scott's speech, alongside Ellis Gray Loring and Henry B. Stanton, was praised by the *Liberator* as being "able and powerful" and was met with a crowd of 1500 to 2000 people who offered those three speakers "loud and often rapturous applause."[86] Scott, however, was not the only Methodist in attendance. During this meeting, Timothy Merritt solidified his conversion to abolitionism by opening the afternoon session of the first day with prayer.[87] Scott, however, was subsequently selected as the only Methodist vice president of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.[88] In the weeks that followed, his antislavery activism only continued.

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[84] Scott directly quoted the Declaration of Independence in his speech and observed, "The children at the South are born as free as the children of the North."

[85] "Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.," 2.

[86] "Boston Vs. The Commonwealth – The People Triumphant!," *Liberator*, January 28, 1837, vol. 7, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). "Mass. Anti-Slavery Society. Fifth Annual Meeting., *Liberator*, January 28, 1837, vol. 7, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). The reporter covering the meeting for the *Liberator* observed that Scott gave "an able speech of some length" that met objections to abolitionism "in a very lucid manner."

[87] "Mass. Anti-Slavery Society. Fifth Annual Meeting.," 3. Samuel Norris, the New Hampshire Methodist and member of the "Cincinnati Fourteen" also attended. See "Meeting of the Massachusetts A.S. Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 11, 1837, vol. 2, no. 58, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[88] "Anti-Slavery Anniversary," *New England Spectator*, February 1, 1837, vol. 3, no. 17, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

At 10 pm on January 25, immediately after delivering his address, Scott departed Massachusetts to attend an antislavery convention being held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania from January 31 through February 3 that was designed to help grow the antislavery movement in that state. Although principally attended by Pennsylvanians, Scott was one of a handful of out-of-state abolitionists invited to oversee the proceedings as a corresponding member and deliver an address. Scott's schedule during this time was frantic. After leaving on January 25, he traveled to New Haven and then to New York by stage. There he met with Amos A. Phelps and Lewis Tappan before setting out for Harrisburg by railroad and arriving on January 30. Scott described the meeting as "spirited" but "characterized by a good deal of unanimity."[89]

On February 4, the day after the convention closed, Scott took a private carriage to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he delivered an antislavery lecture at the Presbyterian Meeting House. In the same way Scott's lecture at Harvard had received hecklers, some students from nearby Dickinson College arrived to disrupt him. According to Scott, these students threw rocks at the meeting house, breaking lights and windows and then tried to interrupt the speech by making a false report of a fire. After finishing the lecture in the evening, Scott returned to Harrisburg and set out for Philadelphia at 4 am the next morning.[90] While making the trip to Philadelphia by railroad, Scott recalled eating breakfast with the delegates to the Harrisburg

[89] Accounts of this meeting can be found at John G. Whittier, "The Pennsylvania Convention.," *New York Evangelist*, February 11, 1837, vol. 8, no. 7, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022), "Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates, assembled from various parts of the State of Pennsylvania, at Harrisburg, Dauphin County, on Thursday, the 31st of January, at 10 o'clock, A.M. in Alter's Hotel, agreeable to the following Call: To the Friends of Immediate Emancipation in Pennsylvania.," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, vol. 1, no. 22, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Orange Scott also offered his own account of this meeting. See O. Scott, "A trip to Pennsylvania.," *Zion's Herald*, February 15, 1837, vol. 8, no. 6, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

[90] During the convention, Scott had met with John Price Durbin, the president of Dickinson College, who invited him to make a trip to Carlisle. Abolitionists in Carlisle had also invited him to come and deliver a lecture in their town. While in Carlisle, Scott stopped by Durbin's residence only to find that he was not even home. Scott remarked, however, that the 36-mile round trip, which he made in the span of a few hours, took a toll on his physical health. It "has reduced my health and strength very low," he reported, noting that the entire journey had greatly reduced the amount of sleep he had been able to have.

Convention and witnessing an instance of racism against two African Americans. After the two African American men were forced to leave, Scott recalled that he and his company of 50 refused to eat breakfast or dinner.[91] He then spent his weekend in Philadelphia lecturing on slavery on February 5 at Temperance Hall and then preaching to a crowd of 1200-1500 people the following day. Scott concluded his trip to Pennsylvania by attending another antislavery meeting in Philadelphia on the 6th, departing the next day and arriving in Lowell on February 10. Overall, he was optimistic about the trip. "The cause of abolition is onward in Pennsylvania," he assured readers of the *Zion's Herald*.[92]

Scott's popularity continued to grow inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church despite the best efforts of anti-abolition Methodists. These critics, often in positions of authority and influence, echoed the same fundamental arguments that Whedon and Fisk had postulated in the opening months of 1835: that Scott had abandoned his ministerial labor in favor of political agitation. One person took to the *Zion's Herald* in February 1837 to write an open letter to Orange Scott that expressed his frustrations. "I have read your communications ... with regret and sorrow," this man, identified only as "I. Davis," wrote, specifying that his greatest "regret" was watching "one who has heretofore labored with so much zeal in the cause of Christ" instead become "a leader in the arena of political strife."[93] Like Whedon, Fisk, Bangs, and Hedding, this critic believed Scott's abolitionism could not be reconciled with his religious ministry. But where many church leaders simply suggested this view, Davis crystallized it: "your manifest exchange of the *gospel* for *politics*...." He especially took issue with Scott's concurrence with Timothy

[91] Scott summarized his thoughts on this discrimination succinctly: "Colored men had prepared our victuals, and colored men were handing it round, but a colored man must not sit down at the same table with us, and eat his own victuals, from his own plate! O shame! shame!"
[92] Scott, "A trip to Pennsylvania.," 2.
[93] The context of Scott's subsequent reply seems to suggest he was unfamiliar with Davis since he referred to "Br. Davis" and "'I. Davis,'" making use of quotations around his name.

Merritt that Christians were obligated to take "the *right* side" on slavery. In the same way that Fisk and others had argued that slavery's morality rested on circumstance, Davis challenged the idea that there could ever be a "right side" in the first place. "This I deny," he said of the idea that God required them to take a position. He further argued that because different people believed themselves to be right on slavery that nobody could know what the right side even was. Although Davis professed his desire to see slavery abolished, he concluded by worrying that abolitionism had made Scott insane.[94]

Orange Scott finished his reply to Davis the day after receiving the paper. His response addressed some of the ancillary charges that Davis brought against him but highlighted the two main points: that slavery was political and that there was no right side to the issue. With respect to the former, Scott wrote that ministers could engage in politics, even party politics. Although skeptical of the virtues of partisan politics, he insisted he had done no such thing. "My accuser has brought no evidence to show," he wrote, "that I have written a political essay." As we have already seen, Scott insisted that abolitionism was simply a manifestation of Christian faith: the works that accompanied one's spiritual convictions. As such, he believed his essays and his articles on slavery were religious, not political documents. Second, he rejected Davis' assertion that humans should act as "indifferent spectators" because "He [God] requires us to act, and to act according to our *best light*."[95] Unlike Davis, Scott believed there to be a universal truth and

[94] I. Davis, "To the Rev. Orange Scott.," February 22, 1837, *Zion's Herald*, vol. 8, no. 8, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Davis clarified he was not referring to Scott as a "maniac" since he believed Scott was just exhibiting temporary insanity on a specific issue.
[95] O. Scott, "Reply to I. Davis.," *Zion's Herald*, March 1, 1837, vol. 8, no. 9, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott explicitly stated that he and Timothy Merritt stood together on the doctrine of "taking sides." Scott, however, did not confine his abolitionism to the religious sphere and cited the case of Athenian statesman Solon as an example of citizens being required to act when "great interests" of the nation or people were at stake.

an absolute moral standard. Because of this, humans were obligated to translate the moral principles they derived from their consciences into tangible measures or policies.

The day after writing his reply to Davis, Scott penned a second response aimed at further exploring the familiar debate of whether slavery was a moral or political subject. For Scott, one phrase that Davis had used stood out to him: "slavery was an ingredient in the cement which bound together our political union." This afforded Scott the opportunity to express his views on the Union and its complicated relationship with slavery. For his part, he described Davis's assertion about slavery as "ignorance and error." However, if Davis was correct, Scott said he welcomed disunion. "The sooner ... the better," he said of it.[96] But Scott, unlike a William Lloyd Garrison, did not necessarily agree with the premise. The U.S. Constitution may have recognized slavery, but it did not affirm it. He noted that the word did not appear in the document, that the Constitution did not prohibit abolition, and that it afforded abolitionists with the tools of speech and petition that could eventually abolish slavery. The Constitution may have accepted that slavery existed, but "it does not *enjoin it as a duty on any of the States*."[97] Ultimately, abolition required political action, but, as we have seen, Scott's Wheel of Reform viewed politics as a final stage rather than a beginning. While "slavery must be finally abolished by legislative or political action," he nevertheless told Davis that "such action never will take place till the community ... feel slavery is a heinous sin against God...."[98] Scott justified this position on the basis that he had

[96] O. Scott, "Reply to I. Davis," *Zion's Herald*, March 8, 1837, vol. 8, no. 10, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). In the first reply to Davis, Scott quoted McDuffie's assertion that slavery was the "corner stone" of the Union. He repeated this same point in the second article, saying that Davis' views would turn slavery into the corner stone of the church as well as the state. Scott, however, wrote later in the article that he did not believe the Union was even in danger. He believed secession would hasten the end of slavery and concluded that "WE can live without them, but they cannot live without us."

[97] Scott argued that abolitionism was constitutional because slavery could be abolished in every state without a single change to the Constitution.

[98] Scott added later: "Every man who believes slavery a sin, to act consistently, must vote for such men to Congress as will oppose it, whether they be for or against the present administration."

different identities. He was a Christian, and his Christian identity compelled him to become an abolitionist. But his Christian faith and his abolitionism together required him to exercise his rights as an American citizen and vote for antislavery candidates.[99]

Scott finished his brief controversy with Davis by offering a final repudiation of the constant criticism that abolitionists were engaged in politics. The claim, he argued, had become nothing more than "the hobby on which we ride off every thing we don't like." The anti-abolition Methodist insistence that Christians could not touch political subjects was the source of the problem. Scott considered that argument to be an abrogation of duty. "Let every man do right in all things," he told Davis, "and not be deterred by the stereotyped objections of 'politics' and 'priestcraft.'" Unlike the anti-abolition Methodists, Scott turned to the Wesleyan Methodists of Great Britain – men such as Richard Watson – as the example to emulate. According to Scott, the British Methodists had sent more petitions to Parliament than all other religious organizations combined. By contrast, American Methodism had allowed itself to become "paralyzed" by slavery.[100] This led Scott to distinguish what he identified as "*modern* Methodism" and "Ancient American Methodism." This distinction would be essential in the years that followed.

"Ancient American Methodism was not so afraid of politics," he wrote, adding that the modern church had betrayed the legacy of John Wesley and Francis Asbury. He further linked the older vision of the church with the modern Methodist understanding of the separation between church and state. "What a union of *Church* and *State* used to exist in those days!" he sarcastically wrote of the times when Methodists inserted antislavery provisions into the Church

[99] Scott, "Reply to I. Davis," March 8, 1837, 2. Scott's exact wording is, "With the great political parties, as abolitionists, we have nothing to do. But we have something to do with slavery, ... as citizens - and as Christians, we have something to do with it, not only in all the States, but in all nations under heaven."
[100] Scott, "Reply to I. Davis," March 8, 1837, 2.

Discipline.[101] As we have seen with the Wheel of Reform, Scott did not believe in an impenetrable wall between church and state. He advocated for a symbiotic relationship in which both worked in different but interconnected capacities to promote morality and justice.

The next few weeks were largely quiet on the abolition front. Scott had returned to Lowell to attend to his ministerial duties. Nevertheless, he weighed in on the public controversy between Timothy Merritt and Wilbur Fisk that had begun when Merritt revealed himself to be allied with the abolitionists. On March 1, 1837, Merritt had written a lengthy address to Methodists across the free states that outlined his beliefs and what he believed Methodists should do to effectuate the end of slavery. Scott took to the *Zion's Herald* the week after it was published to praise the address and encourage subscribers to read it and reread it. Expressing the "great satisfaction" he felt upon reading it, he said that it confirmed that Merritt had formally joined "the abolition ranks." The address also explained Fisk's anger. In Scott's view, Merritt was a threat to Fisk and the anti-abolitionists because he was an effective communicator and a respected figure who "would produce a mighty influence upon a large portion of the M.E. Church."[102]

Scott also reinforced his views on the Constitution during this period of relative calm, forwarding an article to the *Zion's Herald* that George Storrs had written for the *American Citizen*. In this article, Storrs cited the Treaty of Ghent as evidence that antislavery measures were constitutional. If the Constitution authorized the ratification of a treaty with antislavery provisions, Storrs' argument went, then it flowed that the Constitution itself was not inherently

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[101] Scott, "Reply to I. Davis," March 8, 1837, 2.

[102] O. Scott, "Rev. T. Merritt's Address.," *Zion's Herald*, March 15, 1837, vol. 8, no. 11, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). For Timothy Merritt's address, see, T. Merritt, "To the Methodists in the Non-Slaveholding States, Especially in New England.," *Zion's Herald*, March 8, 1837, vol. 8, no. 10, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott highlighted Merritt's use of an Address from the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky, which he considered to be a "good authority" since it came from a slave state.

proslavery. Scott concurred with this "*fact*" and believed it important that abolitionists remember that they had the law, the Constitution, and the Declaration on their side, but felt it was important for all abolition Methodists to ask themselves a follow-up question: "Are we as a nation doing all we can to get rid of slavery?"[103] If the Constitution was antislavery, it was only antislavery if abolitionists and evangelicals had the will to make it so.

On March 28, Scott attended a quarterly meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Lynn, Massachusetts. The meeting was a simple one-day affair, but many important figures in the state's antislavery movement were present: William Lloyd Garrison, Wendall Phillips, and Henry B. Stanton. Some of Scott's other allies, including Timothy Merritt, John G. Whittier, and Alanson St. Clair, also attended. After Merritt opened the meeting with prayer, business commenced and largely turned to a discussion of resolutions. These resolutions were, according to the *Liberator*, debated rigorously but eventually adopted unanimously. During this process, Scott offered his own resolution, proclaiming that the "principal origin" of proslavery sentiment was "mere selfishness."[104] The *Liberator* approved of Scott's resolution and his overall conduct, informing readers that "Orange Scott was as bold and energetic as John Wesley."[105] The symbolism was hardly implied: to Garrison, Scott had become the American heir to John Wesley and his antislavery legacy.

At the same time, the debate between Merritt and Fisk continued in the *Zion's Herald*. Scott supported Merritt's course and encouraged readers to continue monitoring the debate, but he turned his attention to what he viewed as a larger problem. He summarized this problem as

[103] O. Scott and Geo. Storrs, "For Zion's Herald.," *Zion's Herald*, March 22, 1837, vol. 8, no. 12, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[104] "Mass. Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, April 7, 1837, vol. 7, no. 15, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[105] "Quarterly Meeting.," *Liberator*, March 31, 1837, vol. 7, no. 14, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

being the poor coverage of the debate in the broader, "official" Methodist press. Papers like the *Christian Advocate*, the *Maine Wesleyan Journal*, the *Pittsburg Conference Journal*, and the *Western Christian Advocate*, needed to publish it. This complaint reflects Scott's longstanding support for a robust culture of free speech and free discussion. The gag on the discussion of slavery inside the church, in Scott's view, could only make sense for one reason: Merritt had written "an *unanswerable document*." The only way to defeat abolitionism, then, was through censorship. Scott made this connection between abolitionism and freedom of speech explicit, noting that one could not read Merritt's argument and walk away "opposing abolitionism and free discussion." For Scott, as seen by his Wheel of Reform, freedom of speech was an essential component of abolitionism because it could awaken an apathetic and uninformed public.[106]

The following month, Scott lent his support to the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society by attending its quarterly meeting on April 19. Scott did not play a significant part in organizing the meeting, but he participated by offering a resolution and debating two others. His resolution championed the kind of antislavery unity that characterized his worldview and would become important in the years that followed as abolitionists increasingly found themselves divided over a variety of other issues. From his belief that slavery was a national sin, it flowed that abolitionists should unite with all persons "who see and acknowledge its evils." For Scott,

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[106] O. Scott, "The Late Discussion.," *Zion's Herald*, April 12, 1837, vol. 8, no. 15, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott would again complain about this culture of censorship that the Methodist Episcopal hierarchy had cultivated, writing to La Roy Sunderland that Fisk would use the *Christian Advocate* to condemn abolitionists on a biased national platform and would not even take to the pages of abolition Methodist papers to meet his opponents on equal footing. "How long are we to be abused through the [sic] of our official paper without any redress?" he asked and ultimately concluded that "he [Fisk] is so zealously engaged, in a very bad cause" because he had lent "The whole weight of his influence" to supporting slavery. See O. Scott, "Dr. Fisk and the London Christian Advocate.," *Zion's Watchman*, May 20, 1837, vol. 2, no. 72, p. 1-2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Database (accessed April 11, 2022).

slavery was a paramount evil and all abolitionists needed to set aside their political, denominational, ideological, and cultural differences and "co-operate" against it.[107]

On May 6, Scott hosted the quarterly meeting for the Lowell station, the final meeting before the annual conference that summer. This meeting embodied Scott's views on the state of abolitionism within the broader church. Its resolutions, adopted unanimously, promoted the staples of Scott's brand of abolition Methodism. It called slavery a sin, defined slavery as a moral question with a political dimension, reaffirmed racial equality, and claimed modern Methodism had departed from the ground of Wesley, Coke, and Asbury. For Scott, it represented how much Lowell had changed on slavery during his tenure as its stationed minister. "If there are any anti-abolitionists in our church in this place," he wrote, "I do not know them." He ended his ruminations on the quarterly meeting with a hope that other towns would emulate Lowell.[108]

Scott departed Lowell immediately after the quarterly meeting ended to attend the annual American Anti-Slavery Society meeting in New York City on May 9. La Roy Sunderland's *Zion's Watchman* touted Scott's presence, mentioning him and James Birney by name as two of their "distinguished friends" who would be attending.[109] On the opening day of the meeting, Scott had the enviable task of following Charles Gardiner, a Black minister from Philadelphia whose speech became the talk of abolitionists across the nation.[110] After Gardiner's speech, Scott rose to offer two resolutions that he felt spoke for themselves. The first resolution championed his admiration for the Declaration of Independence and natural rights, which he argued were

[107] "Quarterly Meeting of the Middlesex Co. Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, April 28, 1837, vol. 7, no. 18, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[108] O. Scott, "Resolutions of the Lowell Quarterly Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, May 10, 1837, vol. 8, no. 19, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[109] "Anniversary of the A.A. Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, April 22, 1837, vol. 2, no. 68, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[110] Even the *Zion's Herald* treated other speakers like Orange Scott with a passing mention and dedicated most of its coverage to Gardiner. See "The American Anti-Slavery Society.," *Zion's Herald*, May 24, 1837, vol. 8, no. 23, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

perfectly compatible with Christianity. Operating with that premise in mind, he concluded that abolitionism "is equally demanded by our professions as republicans and Christians."[111] As seen with the Wheel of Reform, a lived Christian faith and a secular republican government were not adversaries. In the ideal world, Scott believed they were partners in the work of moral reform.

Scott took this perspective further with his second resolution, defending not only the Declaration of Independence but the Constitution itself. To Scott, slavery was a "violation" of the due process clause. In 1836, Scott had said that the Constitution may have recognized the existence of slavery but that did not mean that it affirmed the institution. He now carried that belief to its logical conclusion. "The Constitution of the United States," he declared, "so far from guaranteeing slavery, is and was designed to be wholly incompatible with its perpetuity." This view had increasingly become a staple among some political-minded abolitionists. Scott, however, took it even further. In the same way he attacked the principles behind slavery, he identified the legislative guarantee of due process as protecting all citizens from oppression. The Constitution had established equal justice under the law, a judicial philosophy wholly incompatible with race-based chattel slavery. "The Constitution says nothing about color," he said, "but that *no man* shall be deprived, &c."[112] Rights were immutable gifts from God rather than privileges conferred by a person or government. William Goodell, the editor of the *Friend of Man*, was especially impressed with Scott's ability to embrace America's founding documents

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[111] *Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society, with the Speeches Delivered at the anniversary Meeting Held in the City of New York, on the 9th May, 1837*, p. 15-16 (New York: Printed by William S. Dorr, 123 Fulton-Street), HeinOnline (accessed November 2, 2022).

[112] *Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society*, 16. Scott argued that due process protected citizens from laws which "giv[e] to the strong the rights to take away from the weak their rights of property, their purse or their person,..." He therefore directly invoked slavery and linked it to the future Social Darwinist arguments on natural selection. Scott further justified his defense of African Americans as human beings by pointing to the fact that "The Constitution says nothing about slaves or slavery; and if its provisions refer at all to slavery, it is under the term *persons*."

as a means of "turning the tables" on defenders of slavery while La Roy Sunderland praised Scott's "very forcible and conclusive arguments."[113]

From June 7 through June 17, the New England Conference held their annual meeting in Nantucket. Scott had spent the previous week attending the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Convention at the end of May and then arrived in Nantucket in early June to lecture on slavery. Scott saw the annual conference as an opportunity to promote abolitionism among the ministry, distributing hundreds of pages of antislavery literature written by Gerrit Smith and Henry B. Stanton. In one instance which he recounted to La Roy Sunderland after the conference, a presiding elder threw one of Smith's pamphlets on the floor, leading Scott to observe a common theme: abolition Methodists studied the subject and wanted to discuss it while the anti-abolitionists avoided discussion and, if that failed, supported suppression. "*Abolitionists* are those who have *examined* the subject," he concluded of his unsuccessful efforts to appeal to anti-abolitionists, adding that "*anti-abolitionists* are those who will *not read or hear*."[114]

On the eve of the conference, the abolition Methodists conferred to determine their course of action over the next ten days. This meeting, which began at 4 pm on June 6 in the vestry of the Nantucket Methodist Church, included leaders in the abolition Methodist faction of the conference such as Orange Scott, Jotham Horton, Joseph A. Merrill, Isaac Bonney, Shipley W. Willson, A.D. Merrill, Phineas Crandall, and Timothy Merritt. They were concerned about Beverley Waugh, the anti-abolition bishop scheduled to preside over their annual conference. Just as Hedding had tried to dampen antislavery agitation at the Springfield Conference, they

[113] "Letter from the Editor. – No. 2.," *Friend of Man*, May 17, 1837, vol. 1, no. 48, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). "American Anti-Slavery Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, May 20, 1837, vol. 2, no. 72, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[114] O. Scott, "Editorial Correspondence.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 22, 1837, vol. 2, no. 81, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

feared that Waugh, a forty-seven year old Doctor of Divinity from Virginia, would act even more aggressively.[115] Scott took the most extreme position among those present, resolving that they should open the annual conference by presenting antislavery memorials and, if Waugh refused to receive them, "we will unitedly, and utterly refuse to do any business till we have these, our just rights." Scott's proposal proved to be too radical for even the ministers that composed the New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society, and his motion was laid on the table after some debate. In response, Scott tempered his resolution so that it suggested forming a committee to meet with Waugh, "inform him of our wishes," and look into "our determinations" only if he refused to accept the memorials. That suggestion prevailed and the committee was subsequently staffed by Joseph and A.D. Merrill, as well as Willson, Bonney, and Horton.[116]

That evening, Joseph Merrill and the committee went to speak with Waugh about the matter only for him to hedge in his reply. "He could not say," Merrill recalled of whether he would accept the petitions, adding that he had warned them that he may have no choice but to deny their memorials. In reply, Merrill had told Waugh that they would wait until the opening of the conference before taking any action. The next day at 7:30 in the morning, the abolition Methodists met again. In response to Waugh's reply from the previous night, they voted overwhelmingly to form a committee of five that would include Merritt, Sunderland, and Willson to devise a plan if Waugh refused them at the opening of the annual conference. Their proposed solution, which they outlined during a meeting at 4 pm on June 7, was to automatically lay every other issue on the table and, if that failed, motion to adjourn the entire conference. In

[115] For a brief sketch of Waugh's early life, see "Early Experience of Bishop Waugh.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 17, 1894, vol. 69, no. 20, p. 315, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 2, 2022).
[116] T. Merritt, La Roy Sunderland, and F.P. Tracy, "Br. Brown", *Zion's Herald*, June 28, 1837, vol. 8, no. 26, p. 2-3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 2, 2022). La Roy Sunderland also published this in the *Zion's Watchman* on July 8, 1837, under the title "Conference Rights."

other words, the committee's solution on June 7 was nearly identical to the one Scott had proposed on June 6. That afternoon, they created a committee on the bishop's council and a committee to conference with the committee on the bishop's council, the latter of which included Merritt, Scott, Horton, Bonney, and Sunderland. The second of these committees met during the night and debated overarching strategy. When the entire antislavery society met again the next morning at 4:30 am, the committee informed the others that they should settle for no less than formal conference action against slavery. After a brief meeting in the evening, the society adjourned until the next morning.[117]

That next day, on June 9, they received their reply from Waugh. His letter, in some respects, could be seen as a triumph for the abolition Methodists because he agreed to let them present their memorials. However, this was not a concession so much as it was a negotiation. Waugh said he would the allow abolition Methodists to present the petitions only if they met two conditions. First, abolition Methodists would "confine" their petitions to simply being "a respectful petition or memorial to the General Conference of 1840." Second, Waugh requested that they agree not to publish their report on slavery because he feared doing so would "increase or keep up an excitement on the subject." Waugh's letter also included a lengthy defense of anti-abolition Methodism and reiterated many of the same points others had already made. However, one element of Waugh's reply proved new and significant. He took direct aim at the underlying premise behind their annual conference agitation and his two conditions were reflective of that. He rejected the very concept of "conference rights" that Shipley Willson had promoted in 1835 and Orange Scott had championed in his letters to Hedding in 1836. "I cannot admit this unqualified or unlimited doctrine of right," Waugh told the abolitionists while warning them of

[117] Merritt, Sunderland, and Tracy, "Br. Brown," 2.

its "destructive tendency." He further asserted that slavery was a subject which could only be handled by the general conference since it concerned the entire church, meaning annual conferences could not condemn the peculiar institution.[118] By making the point that annual conferences did not even have the right to criticize slavery, Waugh's conditions forced abolition Methodists to reject their belief in conference rights and affirm the anti-abolition view of ecclesiastical supremacy.

Waugh's reply produced what society secretary Frederick P. Tracy described as "considerable discussion." The one thing that the abolition Methodists agreed on was the formation of another committee. This committee, composed of Merritt, Scott, Sunderland, and James Porter, would determine a new course of action. The next day, on June 10, the society met again at 4:30 am. Scott began their business by relaying a letter that the new committee had sent to Waugh as well as his subsequent response. The committee had told Waugh that their memorials made no mention of legislative, judicial, or executive action against slavery and should therefore be allowed in their present state. On the issue of conference rights, they insisted they were doing nothing different than other annual conferences had already done when they passed anti-abolition and proslavery resolutions. They simply wished to publish their own conference's opinion on slavery. In reply, Waugh said their views on conference rights were disqualifying and that he had no choice but to withdraw his "conciliatory measure." He did, however, grapple with the fact that anti-abolition conferences had passed resolutions that exercised the rights he was denying to the New England Conference. Waugh reconciled these views under the framework that because the Cincinnati Conference had supported anti-abolition,

[118] Merritt, Sunderland, and Tracy, "Br. Brown," 2.

that made anti-abolition resolutions permissible because they simply did the will of the General Conference.[119]

Merritt, Scott, Horton, Sunderland, and Porter met with Waugh in person after receiving his letter, but little came from the meeting. Instead, the abolition Methodists made the decision to present their memorials "singly" and appointed Scott, Joseph Merrill, and Porter to serve on a committee that would manage the business of the conference on behalf of the abolition Methodists.[120] Most of these movements, as seen, took place behind-the-scenes of the annual conference and not in public view. This enabled the anti-abolition Methodists to construct a narrative that downplayed abolitionism's influence in the conference. As Nathan Bangs told readers of the *Christian Advocate*, "ordinary business has been conducted in the usual way" and he assured them that the abolitionists would not interrupt "the harmony of their proceedings."[121] Even as people touted a narrative of harmony, however, there was nevertheless an acknowledgment of the underlying tension. One correspondent to the *Zion's Herald*, "W.H.Y.," recalled that the conference "seemed to possess the spirit of love and brotherly kindness" but was still dominated by "Questions, the most serious and vital...."[122] These questions all revolved around slavery in one way or another, and dissension over church government was increasingly becoming an element in that struggle. By rejecting the memorials on the assumption that annual conferences had no right to act against the will of the Cincinnati General Conference, Waugh had further intertwined the fates of slavery and church government.

[119] Merritt, Sunderland, and Tracy, "Br. Brown," 2.
[120] Merritt, Sunderland, and Tracy, "Br. Brown," 2. The New England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society would later meet during the conference on June 15, 1837, where they issued their annual report and announced that the society had over one hundred members. See "Report," *Zion's Herald*, June 28, vol. 8, no. 26, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[121] N.B., "From the New-England Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 30, 1837, vol. 11, no. 43, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 2, 2022).
[122] W.H.Y., "Close of the Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 28, 1837, vol. 8, no. 26, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 2, 2022).

At the annual conference, Orange Scott received a change of assignment, by his own request. Although he would continue to reside in Lowell, he was transferred to Wilbraham, Massachusetts in Presiding Elder Joseph A. Merrill's Springfield District as a superannuated preacher. This position meant Scott would be freed from the responsibilities of preaching, overseeing class meetings, and managing a congregation. Serving under Merrill proved integral to what followed. As a fellow abolition Methodist, Merrill offered Scott a certificate that authorized him to act as an official antislavery agent for the 1837-1838 conference year. Scott had already been very active in the antislavery movement between October 1836 and May 1837. His actions only increased in the year that followed the Nantucket Conference. As he told La Roy Sunderland in July, he may have "closed up" his work as "a *stationed preacher*" but would continue to work as a "*gospel minister*."[123]

Scott wasted no time in returning to his antislavery activities. After a brief stay in Lowell, he departed for Augusta, Maine on June 27 to attend the Maine Annual Conference with George Storrs. They had two goals: help found a conference antislavery society and lobby to open the *Maine Wesleyan Journal* to antislavery discussion. Waugh, who presided over the Maine Conference, enjoyed less success than he had at the New England Conference because the abolitionists accomplished both their objectives. He successfully prevented official conference action but failed to suppress unofficial antislavery activity. Abolition Methodists in Maine not only founded an antislavery society with approximately seventy members; they also won the struggle over the *Maine Wesleyan Journal*. Storrs, who was in Augusta days before the

[123] "New-England Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 30, 1837, vol. 11, no. 34, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Orange Scott, The Life of Rev. Orange Scott, 39-40.

conference opened, deserved most of the credit for these developments. Nevertheless, Scott's presence helped bolster the abolition Methodists.[124]

In early July, Scott traveled to Somersworth, New Hampshire to attend the New Hampshire Conference. As was the case with Maine and New England, the conference was prohibited from taking formal action against slavery and, as a result, the only abolition Methodist successes came in unofficial forms: acquiring new subscribers for the *Zion's Watchman*, issuing resolutions at the conference's antislavery society, and delivering public lectures. For his part, Scott did not confine his actions in New Hampshire to the abolition Methodists; he also lectured to the Freewill Baptists and the Congregationalists.[125] Scott spent each subsequent week in a different town to deliver antislavery lectures, speaking in Lowell on July 16, visiting the Congregational meeting house in Dewitt on July 23, and addressing Timothy Merritt's church at Lynn, Massachusetts on July 29. On July 30, Scott remained in Lynn to speak at the Lynn Common and the Lynn Wood End.[126]

During July, Scott relayed his recent activities and opinions on the Nantucket Conference to a wider audience. It also afforded him the opportunity to reflect on the past conference year. During this time, however, he retracted some of his earlier, more polemical critiques of Elijah Hedding so that he could better criticize Beverley Waugh in the present. While he had opposed

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[124] Geo. Storrs, "Dear Br. Sunderland:," *Zion's Watchman*, July 15, 1837, vol. 2, no. 60, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). O. Scott, "Editorial Correspondence.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 22, 1837, vol. 2, no. 81, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott arrived on the second day of the annual conference, lecturing once. During the Maine Annual Conference, abolition Methodists made the decision to withdraw their memorials to avoid, as Scott put it, "coming into *collision* with the *bishop*." This disappointed Scott, but he was still "pleased" with his visit and believed their decision made strategic sense so that they could prepare for the next year and take the "*high ground*" then.
[125] Scott, "Editorial Correspondence.," 2. Storrs, "Dear Br. Sunderland:," 3. "N.H. Conf. A.S. Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 12, 1837, vol. 2, no. 84, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott proposed a resolution that slavery had increased in the nation during the last 50 years and exerted a "frightful influence" over the Christian churches.
[126] O. Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 26, 1837, vol. 2, no. 86, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

Hedding's conduct during the Springfield Conference, he believed Waugh had acted even more aggressively in stifling abolitionism at the Nantucket Conference.[127] Waugh's actions, according to Scott, had essentially disenfranchised between 3000 and 4000 members of the church and abrogated conference's right to speak on "a moral question!" The Orange Scott of July 1837 wondered aloud if such conduct could even be considered Methodism and he asked if "one man" should be allowed to "rule hundreds of ministers and thousands of members...?" Furthermore, Scott linked Hedding and Waugh together in this discussion, a rhetorical point that represents his increasing skepticism of the power of bishops. The 1836-1837 conference year, however, marked a turning point in the struggle against anti-abolitionism and slavery. Not only did it connect disagreements over church government with slavery; it also represented the beginning of abolition Methodism's geographic consolidation of the New England conferences. "NEW ENGLAND is REDEEMED," Scott assured readers of the *Zion's Watchman* and he estimated that the three conferences together had over 300 abolitionist ministers.[128] But his ultimate goal was still national church action. Believing the struggle in New England was turning, he felt more comfortable shifting his attention towards the mid-Atlantic states.[129] To Scott, the popular will and ministerial support was there; the impediments of the bishops were the largest obstacle.

[127] O. Scott, "The True State of the Case.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 22, 1837, vol. 2, no. 81, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). This article crystallized Scott's retractions about Hedding personally but remained defiant with respect to the larger issues at stake: "the rights of Conferences and the powers of bishops." As he put it, "from a war of PRINCIPLE I do not recede – No! Not I." Scott offered additional details in a subsequent article. See O. Scott, "Queries Answered.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 12, 1837, vol. 2, no. 84, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[128] Scott estimated that "seven-eights" of the New Hampshire Conference were abolitionists.

[129] O. Scott, "Editorial Correspondence.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 22, 1837, vol. 2, no. 81, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott surmised that with the three New England conferences – New England, New Hampshire, and Maine – joined by "six other annual conferences" that "Our next General Conference will present an aspect on the subject of abolition very different from that of our last." Crediting the *Zion's Watchman* with the victory in Maine, Scott believed that the newspaper would be key to abolitionizing other annual conferences.

After his tour of Massachusetts in July, Scott returned to the seat of his old presiding eldership in Providence to commemorate the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the West Indies from August 1 through August 3. He then set out to attend annual conferences in New York state. On his ride there, he encountered a New Orleans slaveholder and atheist, debated with him about slavery, abolition, racial equality, and even Harriet Martineau. His trip took him to Utica on August 6, Buffalo on August 8, and Jamestown on August 9. While in Utica, Scott met with George Storrs and the two agreed to divide their antislavery agency in half: Scott would attend the Erie Conference and Storrs would visit the Black River Conference before they met at the Oneida Conference on August 30. In total, Scott's trip from Providence to Jamestown amounted to almost 800 miles by railroad, steamboat, and stage.[130]

Confident in the trajectory of his own conference and the neighboring conferences, Scott increasingly set his sights westward. While traveling to New York to attend the annual meeting of the Erie Conference, Scott penned an editorial in the *Zion's Watchman* endorsing an antislavery convention that Sunderland had proposed in early August. The annual conferences that composed the free states, in Scott's view, needed to form closer ties and "come together and *take* council on the important crisis to which we have arrived." He envisioned abolition Methodists holding two separate meetings: one for the New England conferences and another for the "middle and western conferences" in central New York.[131] These plans would become

[130] O. Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 26, 1837, vol. 2, no. 86, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott delivered sermons in Utica and Buffalo. He stayed with a Presbyterian clergyman during his stay in Jamestown.
[131] O. Scott, "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 19, 1837, vol. 2, no. 85, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott offered a meticulous account of his journey during the summer and fall of 1837 in a series of letters to La Roy Sunderland in the *Zion's Watchman*.

official that fall when Scott, Sunderland, and Merritt announced a New England Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention at Lynn, Massachusetts.[132]

In some respects, the abolition Methodists in the mid-Atlantic states enjoyed more success than their New England counterparts. During his travels, Scott had received word that the Pittsburgh Conference's annual meeting had passed resolutions critical of a proslavery measure adopted by the Baltimore Annual Conference earlier that summer. During the Baltimore annual conference, the delegates had modified the Church Discipline's stringent prohibition on the slave trade within their boundaries. To the Baltimore Annual Conference, the prohibition on "buying and selling" should not be applied to mean "the simple fact of purchase or sale" and instead be evaluated by "the attendant circumstances," taking "kind purposes or good intentions" into account.[133] By turning slavery and slave-trading into morally ambiguous acts, the Baltimore Annual Conference had explicitly endorsed a relativistic moral framework that was diametrically opposed to Scott's moral absolutism. Of an even more pressing concern to Scott was that the entire resolution had been "unconstitutional" because it "virtually nullified our General Rule on slavery." Scott attributed the victory at Pittsburgh to one factor: the bishops. While the New England and Maine conferences had been undermined by Waugh, Robert Roberts – "our oldest and most experienced bishop!" – oversaw the Pittsburgh Conference and did not intervene in the affairs of the annual conference as Waugh had done. Because Roberts was scheduled to preside over the Erie Conference, Scott was optimistic. Scott, however, continued to worry about an

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[132] T. Merritt, O. Scott, and La Roy Sunderland, "New England Methodist A.S. Convention," Zion's Watchman, September 23, 1837, vol. 2, no. 81, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). "Call for a Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention, to meet at Lynn, Mass., October 25, 1837.," *Zion's Herald*, October 11, 1837, vol. 8, no. 41, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). The *Zion's Herald* also announced they could not publish the signed names announcing the convention because it was "about 700." For a list of all ministers and members who signed, see "Call," *Zion's Watchman*, October 7, 1837, vol. 2, no. 92, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[133] "Baltimore Conference and the Slave Trade.," *Zion's Herald*, June 14, 1837, vol. 8, no. 24, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

underlying problem at stake. The bishops had the absolute power to save or stifle abolitionism. "Is this the *natural tendency of Episcopacy*," he asked, "or, is the fault of *men*?"[134]

Scott's views of Roberts were vindicated, although his hopes for antislavery action by the Erie Conference did not materialize. He preached twice, addressed the conference missionary meeting, and lectured once on slavery. He also conducted a two-day interview with the former governor of Liberia, John Brooke Pinney. According to Scott, Pinney denied "in toto, the doctrine of natural rights," affirmed the right to property in people, and endorsed the slave trade as having been "a blessing" to its victims.[135] Scott's interview with Pinney caught the attention of a wider audience, and its contents were even discussed in the *Liberator* under the title "READ THIS!"[136] The conference, however, ultimately voted 32-29 to lay a rebuke of the Baltimore Conference on the table and failed to pass any antislavery resolutions. Most of these questions were closely divided, but abolition Methodists could not attribute their failures to the bishops. "Bishop Roberts is not a gag law bishop," Scott wrote, praising him for "presiding" over the conference rather than acting to "*rule* the conference." The success of abolition Methodism, then, required the convergence of two factors. It took an abolitionist majority that "came boldly up to the discussion" as well as "a consistent republican bishop" like Roberts.[137] New England had the former but lacked the latter. The Erie Conference had the latter but did not have the former. Nevertheless, Scott helped the abolition Methodists form a conference antislavery society

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[134] O. Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 26, 1837, vol. 2, no. 86, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[135] O. Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott," *Zion's Watchman*, September 21, 1837, vol. 2, no. 87, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).
[136] "READ THIS!", *Liberator*, vol. 7, no. 40, p. 4, September 29, 1837, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). The *Liberator* remarked that Pineny would have been a "tory" in 1776.
[137] Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott," September 21, 1837, 2.

composed of 32 members: roughly half of the annual conference delegates. Overall, Scott felt his visit was "very agreeable" and beneficial to the conference's abolitionists.[138]

With the Erie Conference concluded, Scott traveled to Westfield to lecture on slavery, and he then set out for Buffalo again by mid-August. On the way there, he stopped in Lockport to visit Niagara Falls, preach twice at the Methodist Church, and lecture on slavery to Methodist and Presbyterian audiences.[139] After departing Lockport, Scott went through Rochester and Canandaigua before arriving in Auburn to attend a missionary meeting. During his visit in Auburn, Scott toured the city and took special notice of its prison system. Scott's writings on this prison system were neutral and descriptive, until he ultimately concluded that regardless of a person's views, it was "altogether preferable to slavery" because it was a criminal punishment rather than something worse inflicted on people who had committed "no crime."[140]

By the end of the month, Scott had reunited with George Storrs and arrived in Courtlandville, New York to attend the Oneida Conference on August 30. Once again, Scott found himself in a clash over the power of the bishops. When abolition Methodists opened the conference by proposing the formation of an antislavery committee, presiding bishop Elijah Hedding said the motion confused him and he ordered it laid on the table so he could have more time to understand the request. Hedding followed this order with a short address to the body, in

[138] Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott," September 21, 1837, 2. O. Scott, "From Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 9, 1837, vol. 2, no. 88, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott was impressed with the Erie Conference's young ministers, who he said were "men of great promise." He singled out their penchant for "singing" hymns, which he remarked was "altogether ahead of the New England Conferences."
[139] O. Scott, "From the Rev. O. Scott," *Zion's Watchman*, September 21, 1837, vol. 2, no. 87, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). While lecturing on slavery, Scott remarked that anti-abolition Methodists and Presbyterians protested by covering the door with tar, breaking 50-100 lights, and firing a "big gun" at the buildings that broke several windows.
[140] O. Scott, "From Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 9, 1837, vol. 2, no. 88, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). To show that their conditions were objectively preferable to slavery, Scott remarked that prisoners in Auburn worked fewer hours than slaves.

which he told them they could act on slavery if they met two conditions: that their actions aligned with the Methodist Discipline and that they did not contradict the will of the general conference. But, as Scott observed at the time, the second condition meant that no antislavery action could be permitted because the Cincinnati General Conference had established a policy of anti-abolitionism. "It appears to me," he complained to La Roy Sunderland, "that all Conference action would be contrary" even if it aligned perfectly with the Discipline.[141]

The situation with Hedding, however, was more complicated than it had been with either Roberts or Waugh. After meeting with Hedding, Scott supposed the bishop was presenting himself as supporting a "*moderate* anti-slavery," but viewed that claim with skepticism. Although he doubted that Hedding would support any resolution identifying slavery as "a sin," he was somewhat reassured when the bishop personally told him that he was open to resolutions that reaffirmed the Discipline. Hedding even told Scott that he only objected to the Erie Conference's failed resolution against the Baltimore Conference because it had mentioned a sister conference by name. He further admitted that he would be willing to support a modification to the Methodist Episcopal Church's General Rule on Slavery to bar slaveholders from joining the church.[142] Despite these admissions, Hedding remained an anti-abolitionist. He refused to introduce Scott to the annual conference over fears that doing so would be seen as an endorsement of his views. Hedding ultimately felt himself caught between the Discipline of the church and the directives of the general conference, which, as we have seen, contradicted one another. This forced Hedding to walk a difficult line. Scott, however, felt that Hedding's entire

[141] O. Scott, "Oneida Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 16, 1837, vol. 2, no. 89, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). La Roy Sunderland told readers he had consulted with Hedding and could confirm that Scott's observations "have been pronounced correct."

[142] Hedding sent a "substance" of his speech before the Oneida Conference to both the *Christian Advocate* and the *Zion's Herald*. See E. Hedding, "Bishop Hedding's Address.," *Zion's Herald*, November 1, 1837, vol. 8, no. 45, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022) and E. Hedding, "Bishop Hedding's Address.," *Zion's Herald*, November 8, 1837, vol. 8, no. 45, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

premise was wrong because it rested on the assumption that the general conference was the supreme authority of the Methodist Episcopal Church. To Scott, it was not ecclesiastical bodies that reigned supreme, but God and the Bible. There was a hierarchy, with the laws of God flowing through the Discipline and then to the general conference. If the church contradicted the laws of God, Scott wondered aloud if the time may come for him to find a new church.[143]

For Scott, conscience played an important role in this entire process and explains why the struggle over conference rights proved to be so fraught. As we have seen, conscience was the conduit between a person's moral principles and the tangible policies and measures that they adopted. When reflecting on Hedding's argument at Courtlandville, Scott observed that the Methodist Episcopal Church prohibited abolitionists, and only abolitionists, from fulfilling their conscientious duties. While Hedding said he felt "conscience bound" in his course of action, Scott observed that Beverley Waugh had ruled annual conferences in such a way so that one person's "conscience" could override the consciences of an entire conference.[144] The problem here was obvious to Scott. The Methodist Episcopal hierarchy was, by enforcing silence on the question of slavery, indirectly forcing abolition Methodists to affirm what they considered to be a sin. "If our Bishops do not wish to make us do what we consider wrong," he asked, "why do they exercise doubtful and disputed prerogatives to silence us?"[145]

[143] Scott, "Oneida Conference.," 2. Scott wrote that if he was bound to "obey" a people or institutions, it was to laws rather than their "advice." Scott, however, suggested that there could be a breaking point with the general conference. When Hedding told Scott that he would have to withdraw from the Methodist Episcopal Church if he "could no longer submit to the judgment of that body," Scott said this should be "A pretty broad hint to abolitionists," but quickly qualified this by stating that "we shall not be in a hurry to take ourselves out of the church." Scott later added more kindling to this fire by asserting that one bishop's "judgment" did not inherently trump "the judgment of a hundred other brethren" and even noted the bishops were not "infallible." In a postscript to his letter, Scott later defined "bishop men" as being "Whatever the bishop says is law and gospel with them."
[144] As Scott noted in his letter, abolition Methodists did not want Hedding to condemn slavery; they simply wanted him to stay out of their way.
[145] Scott, "Oneida Conference.," 3.

Hedding's remarks to the conference were met with defiance. One minister, Schuyler Hoes, rose and immediately asked if they needed to forward the resolutions to Hedding first for his approval. Hedding, however, quickly concluded business that day when slavery came up and he then informed the ministers that he would prepare a speech on slavery and abolition for them. His speech largely arrived at the same place that Beverley Waugh had during the Nantucket Conference. Hedding said he would give abolition Methodists the opportunity to withdraw their resolutions, or he would be forced to spend time explaining why he had to decline them. Hoes, however, forced Hedding's hand and refused to back down. Hedding then proceeded to deliver another speech on slavery, abolition, and conference rights which amounted to what Scott characterized as "a very lame defence" of a bishop's powers over annual conferences.[146] While Scott only offered a sketch of this argument, he used the opportunity to promote his own vision of Methodism. "We only claim, that he [the bishop] has no right to govern us, in our opinions, on moral questions," he asserted, adding that "we have a *right*, in a Conference capacity, to speak out on all great questions of moral reform, and that he has no right to prevent us, by refusing to perform the proper duties of the chair."[147]

The most controversial element of Hedding's speech came when he again tried to claim he was a moderate on slavery. Hedding said he opposed the slave trade and some aspects of slavery but admitted he would not go so far as to condemn the institution entirely. Like Fisk, Hedding said there could be cases where slavery was justified or even morally good. And in making that argument, he invoked the Golden Rule, a rhetorical argument that Scott likened to one pressing "light" into the service of "darkness" because it took something that was morally

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[146] At this juncture, Scott recalled Hedding turning to Scott and warning him that anyone taking notes and recording erroneous statements could be found guilty of falsehood.

[147] Scott, "Oneida Conference.," 2-3.

evil and qualified it by making its morality contingent on "cases" rather than absolute truth.[148] This "Golden Rule" defense explains why Hedding opposed the types of resolutions supported by abolition Methodists – namely, resolutions identifying slavery itself as an objective sin – since they "imply that they [all slaveholders] are sinners."[149]

Rev. George Peck followed Hedding's speech by proposing a resolution that condemned Orange Scott by name for lecturing on slavery during the Oneida Conference. Peck saw that agitation as an insult to the conference. In Storrs' view, however, Peck had likely been encouraged by Hedding to propose that resolution. Although Peck's resolution was eventually withdrawn at the end of the August 31 session, the situation at the Oneida Conference remained precarious. One minister, William B. Scott, highlighted what he saw as the inconsistency at hand, noting that anti-abolitionists had postponed conference business to pursue "uncourteous resolutions" yet would not extend that same courtesy to the abolitionists.[150] Another minister later recounted that "My very soul was pained" over how Hedding and the anti-abolitionists had treated Orange Scott.[151] The anti-abolitionists at the Oneida Conference were ultimately more successful than their abolition counterparts. The committee on memorials over slavery, for example, was staffed entirely by anti-abolitionists. Nevertheless, the contentious nature of the conference meant that the eventual report on slavery was, in Orange Scott's view, "mild in its tone, and compromising in its character." The Oneida Conference, however, proved to be

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[148] Hedding's "Golden Rule" argument essentially held that slaveholders should practice a more humane form of slavery.
[149] Scott, "Oneida Conference.," 2-3.
[150] Scott, "Oneida Conference.," 2-3. William B. Scott, "Assumed Prerogatives.," October 28, 1837, *Zion's Watchman*, vol. 2, no. 95, p. 1 (accessed April 11, 2022).
[151] J. Watson, "From Rev. J. Watson.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 27, 1838, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

identical in composition to the Erie Conference: both were almost evenly divided on abolitionism and only a minority were willing to "take *a bold stand for the oppressed*."[152]

Scott was not particularly well received at the Oneida Conference. It marked the first time he had ever attended an annual conference and not even been asked to preach, a fact which he attributed to Elijah Hedding and the anti-abolition faction. When the conference adjourned on September 7 at 12:30 pm, Scott departed Courtlandville in less than thirty minutes. He continued his journey across New York, lecturing at nearby the towns of Preble, Amber, Marcellus, and Skaneateles over the next four days. He spent September 12 and September 13 in Auburn to oversee the formation of the Cayuga County Antislavery Society and was in Canandaigua on September 15 to attend a county antislavery convention. Scott was joined by George Storrs and Gerrit Smith and he served as keynote speakers at these events. Scott, who had never heard Smith speak before, observed that this "eminent philanthropist" was "one of the best public speakers I ever heard."[153]

The next morning, Scott left Canandaigua and arrived in Groveland in the afternoon to meet with "old friend" William Hoag. Hoag, a minister in the Genesee Conference who Scott had met during the Cincinnati General Conference, had become friends with him despite their differences on abolitionism. Since the general conference, however, Hoag's views had changed and he had become, in Scott's words, "Thoroughly imbued with the anti-slavery spirit." Scott preached at Hoag's church on September 17 and then in Genesee later that afternoon. He followed his preaching in Genesee with an hour and a half lecture in the evening. The next day, on September 18, Scott traveled to Perry, New York – the site of the forthcoming Genesee

[152] Scott, "Oneida Conference.," 3.
[153] O. Scott, "From Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 30, 1837, vol. 2, no. 91, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

Annual Conference – with "brother and sister Storrs" and delivered an evening lecture at the Baptist church. Scott and Storrs spent their time in Perry staying at the home of Josiah Andrews, the Baptist preacher there. On September 19, Scott again delivered an evening lecture for Perry's Universalist church. During his time in Groveland and Perry, Scott spoke for approximately eight hours, and, during the Genesee Conference, he spoke for another seven and a half hours.[154]

At the Genesee Conference, Scott and Hedding again found themselves on opposite sides of the struggle over slavery and church government. Hedding adopted an identical strategy to the one he had successfully employed during the Oneida Conference, requesting that any resolutions on slavery be laid on the table until he could understand what they meant. However, Hedding's strategy proved far less effective because the Genesee Conference was far more sympathetic to abolitionism, with Scott estimating that nearly every preacher was an abolitionist. The results seemed to vindicate Scott's sanguine views. He participated in the formation of a Genesee Conference Antislavery Society.[155] Abolition Methodists also enjoyed mild successes inside the annual conference itself. When Hedding formed a committee to handle the antislavery memorials, he could staff it only with antislavery ministers, and two of the five were what Scott termed "moderate abolitionists."[156] Scott credited the annual conference's success to the fact that there were few "Bishop men" in attendance. Rather than defer to "names and titles," Scott

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[154] O. Scott, "From Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 7, 1837, vol. 2, no. 26, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Geo. Storrs, "From Rev. Geo. Storrs.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 28, 1837, vol. 2, no. 95, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Storrs wrote his own account of the annual conferences. Like Scott, Storrs was most bullish on the Genesee Annual Conference.

[155] For a brief account of the meeting and the society's constitution by William Hoag, see "Genesee Conf. A.S. Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 18, 1837, vol. 2, no. 98, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[156] In his account of the Genesee Conference, Scott offered insight into how many abolitionists were at the annual conference by saying that he lectured to "seven-eighths" of the conference and oversaw a meeting of preachers that ended in the formation of an antislavery society. He recalled that 60 of the 80 ministers presented joined the society. Of those 60, Scott identified "three-fourths" as being "thorough abolitionists."

favorably noted that many ministers in the Genesee Annual Conference had instead opted "to think and investigate for themselves."[157] This view reflects how Scott's attitudes toward perceived ecclesiastical overreach continued to harden during the summer and fall of 1837.

After his tour of New York, Scott returned to Lowell and immediately set out to lecture on slavery. "*He is no drone, I assure you*," Rev. Ezekiel W. Stickney, Scott's successor at Lowell, informed La Roy Sunderland about Scott's lectures.[158] In early October, Scott took to the pages of the *Zion's Herald* to rebut a critique of "Methodist Abolitionism." An article, written anonymously under the pseudonym Kunosbaton, claimed to agree with the abolitionists in their aims and objectives. However, Kunosbaton followed this praise with the inevitable "but" that characterized anti-abolition Methodist writing. Kunosbaton, however, was not an anti-abolitionist; he was a moderate abolition Methodist who worried Scott's extremism might alienate potential antislavery converts. "But every good cause is liable to abuse," he wrote, identifying the problem with some abolition Methodists as being their "turning away from abolitionism, to engage in the denunciation of the Episcopacy of our Church."[159] This criticism was aimed principally at Orange Scott and other abolition Methodists who had taken to the antislavery press to voice their frustrations with Hedding and Waugh. In Kunosbaton's view, they had turned those isolated incidents into broader criticisms of ecclesiastical power. His

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[157] O. Scott, "From Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 7, 1837, vol. 2, no. 26, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott's coverage of the Genesee Conference, which referenced the Cincinnati General Conference, renewed his controversy with Nathan Bangs, and the two wrote a pair of dueling articles on the subject. See N. Bangs, "Reply to Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 28, 1837, vol. 2, no. 95, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022) and O. Scott, "Reply to Dr. Bangs.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 4, 1837, vol. 2, no. 96, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[158] E.W. Stickney, "From Rev. E.W. Stickney.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 28, 1837, vol. 2, no. 95, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[159] Kunosbaton, "Methodist Abolitionism.," *Zion's Herald*, September 20, 1837, vol. 8, no. 38, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 13, 2022). Given that his objections to abolitionism rested on theological rather than antislavery grounds, his self-identification as "an abolitionist" seems genuine.

argument, then, rested on a fear that Scott was forcing abolition Methodists to choose between anti-abolitionism and their church on one hand or abolitionism and schism on the other.[160]

Regardless of whether Kunosbaton directed his article at Orange Scott specifically, Scott interpreted it as an attack. His response, written fifteen days after Kunosbaton's article was published, opened with a forceful denial of its allegations. In his view, the proslavery and anti-abolition Methodists were the true schismatics because they had seized control of the church government and then wielded it in an unlawful and capricious manner. "Does not this writer know," he asked rhetorically, "that all our objections have been brought against 'unconstitutional' and 'usurped' powers?"[161] If something were unconstitutional, it stood to reason that objections to it were not inherently of a revolutionary character since they acknowledged the legitimacy behind the institution in question. The debate was not over the powers of bishops, but over the constitutional limitations of that power. This was, as Scott put it bluntly, "*our whole object*." Nevertheless, Scott left an important qualifier to his overall affirmation of episcopal church government. "If my rights of conscience and opinion are *properly* and *constitutionally* in the hands and under the control of bishops," he asserted, then "I may hereafter oppose Episcopacy." This established a line of demarcation for some abolition Methodists. If the church would impose "a slavish censorship of conscience and opinion," then the only options were to "submit" or "resist." Since Scott believed conscience was a conduit to

[160] Kunosbaton, "Methodist Abolitionism.," 4. At the end of his letter, Kunosbaton noted, "I have no radicalism in my head, or heart; and I have no desire to tear down the fair edifice our fathers erected, in order to get missiles to hurl at slavery."
[161] Scott's counterargument against Kunosbaton, however, was somewhat unclear or misleading, although his earlier language likely contributed to this confusion. In his October 5 response, he claimed to object only to "the right or wrong of certain acts of certain men." However, his letters to La Roy Sunderland on the annual conferences seemingly made more radical claims about the bishops being liable to err and that ministers should be able to override their will.

God that transcended the whims of politicians and even the dictates of bishops, the church did not wield absolute authority in all matters.[162]

With the antislavery convention in Lynn approaching, Scott took to the *Zion's Watchman* to promote the gathering of abolition Methodists from across New England. Although he had helped bring the convention to life, it was Timothy Merritt, as the stationed minister, who assumed responsibility for the logistics. He acquired venues and places of entertainment as well as lodging for the delegates. In Scott's view, the convention served as an opportunity to protest the individuals "high in Church authority" who had "*assumed* the right" to deny antislavery memorials. Not only does this underscore that Scott had increasingly made opposition to perceived ecclesiastical overreach a fixture of abolition Methodism; his italicization of "assumed" also reflects his belief that the bishops had seized unprecedented power in their effort to stifle free speech. The convention represented an opportunity for all abolition Methodists across New England to stand united in their goals. Whether they were from "the green hills of Vermont and New Hampshire," Massachusetts, Connecticut, or even "little Rhode Island," he wanted them to present a "UNITED VOICE." And, as had become a fixture of Scott's vision of united action, he wanted the support of all Methodists who believed that "holding and treating the human species as property is sin, under all circumstances, and that such a course of conduct should be *immediately abandoned*."[163] Abolitionists could differ on what that process looked like, but Scott saw the sinfulness of slavery as the central component.

Although the Lynn Convention was scheduled to begin on October 25, the convention was informally inaugurated on October 24 by a public lecture that was open to the public and

[162] O. Scott, "Methodist Abolitionism.," *Zion's Herald*, October 18, 1837, vol. 8, no. 42, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[163] O. Scott, "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 20, 1837, vol. 7, no. 43, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

addressed "the duty and responsibility of the churches" more broadly.[164] The affair was heavily covered by the *Zion's Watchman*, which furnished subscribers with a detailed description of the convention, including proceedings, committee reports, and a declaration of sentiments. It brought abolition Methodists from across New England together to act together in a significant capacity for the first time. Orange Scott was an active participant in these proceedings. He delivered speeches, collected payments from *Zion's Watchman* subscribers, and, most significantly, helped oversee the business of the convention. He was one of seven officers and helped draft both the convention's declaration of sentiments and its report on conference rights. In many respects, the resolutions and proclamations that came from the Lynn Convention embodied much of Scott's writing on immediate abolition, the sinfulness of slavery, race relations, free speech, and conference rights. To avoid criticisms like those levied by Kunosbaton, however, Scott and the other abolition Methodists carefully worded their language to clarify that they were not opposed to bishops in general. Instead, they emphasized what they viewed as the abuses of power by Beverley Waugh and Elijah Hedding.[165]

While the Lynn Convention seemingly softened its rhetoric against episcopacy with a qualifying emphasis on "two" and "some," there remained a strong kernel of Orange Scott's more radical musings from his New York travels. For example, the committee on conference rights invoked "The doctrine of human rights" to argue, just as Scott had done, that "one man"

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[164] O. Scott, "The Convention.," *Liberator*, October 20, 1837, vol. 7, no. 43, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[165] For a comprehensive overview of the convention's proceedings, see "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 21, 1837, vol. 2, no. 94, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022), "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 4, 1837, vol. 2, no. 96, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022), "Conference Rights.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 11, 1837, vol. 2, no. 97, p. 1-2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022), "Report: Of the Committee of Slavery," *Zion's Herald*, November 29, 1837, vol. 8, no. 48, p. 1-2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022), and "Resolutions", *Zion's Herald*, December 13, 1837, vol. 8, no. 50, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

could not “deprive a hundred men of their rights.” The bishop answered to the ministers because he was a public servant. Similarly, the committee reaffirmed Scott’s view that “The bishop is *not the Conference*, but merely *the president*.”[166]

One of the most important results to come from the convention was its endorsement of a national Methodist antislavery convention in Utica. Scott, it should be noted, had visited Utica during his travels that fall and had been an early advocate for two regional abolition Methodist conventions. At the same time, abolition Methodists in Utica proposed having their town host a potential convention for Methodists from across the free states. The Lynn Convention unanimously approved a broader gathering of abolition Methodists and assigned Scott to serve on committees to nominate delegates and assist in coordinating logistics. Scott’s committee on nominations hastily compiled a list of delegates from across the three New England annual conferences. This Utica Convention, like the Lynn Convention, was to be composed not only of ministers and presiding elders; it would also include ordinary members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For example, D.H. Ela, the antislavery publisher of the *Zion’s Herald*, was selected as one of the five lay representatives for the New England Conference. Also of note was the fact that Samuel Snowden, an African American minister, was chosen to represent Boston even though he was not officially recognized on the New England Conference’s list of stationed ministers. Orange Scott’s Lowell and Timothy Merritt’s Lynn also represented this changing climate as both towns’ delegations were evenly split between ministers and members.[167]

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[166] “Conference Rights.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, November 11, 1837, vol. 2, no. 97, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022)

[167] “Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention at Utica, N.Y.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, November 11, 1837, vol. 2, no. 97, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). The list included but was not limited to prominent abolition Methodists and Orange Scott friends and allies: Jotham Horton, Timothy Merritt and John Parker, Ezekiel W. Stickney, Joseph A. Merrill, Phineas Crandall, Seth Sprague, Frederick P. Tracy, John F. Adams, and even Orange Scott’s own brother, Ephraim.

The antislavery societies of the various annual conferences, the Lynn Convention, and the announcement of a convention of all abolition Methodists were met with some degree of confusion among the broader antislavery movement. On November 7, 1837, a collection of 48 Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists signed a circular letter calling for a new antislavery organization. These evangelicals explicitly cited the abolition Methodists as an example to emulate, believing that they showed the effectiveness of exclusive denominational action. Both Amos A. Phelps and Orange Scott issued responses, which the *Liberator* published five weeks after the circular letter had been published in the *New England Spectator*.[168] The symbolism of these dual articles is significant. Scott and Phelps were two of the leading evangelical abolitionists in Massachusetts, and both strongly endorsed Garrison, the *Liberator*, and the existing antislavery movement. But Scott's rebuttal proved more consequential since abolition Methodism had inspired the circular in the first place. Garrison, for his part, endorsed the actions of the "Methodist abolitionists" because they were simply holding antislavery meetings in a "denominational capacity." As had increasingly become the case since they first corresponded in 1834, Garrison turned to "our uncompromising bro. Orange Scott" to serve as a spokesman for abolition Methodism.[169]

Scott claimed that the writers of the circular letter "misunderstood" the abolition Methodists because their religious organizations were narrowly tailored to the goal of organizing abolitionism within the church. For Scott, geography was crucial. These societies were not

[168] "Circular.," *New England Spectator*, November 15, 1837, vol. 3, no. 45, p. 1-2. A.A. Phelps, "NEW ORGANIZATION!", *Liberator*, December 23, 1837, vol. 7, no. 52, p. 3, Gale, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). O. Scott, "TRUE STATE OF THE CASE.," *Liberator*, December 23, 1837, vol. 7, no. 52, p. 3, Gale, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott's letter was originally written for the *New England Spectator*, but they declined to publish it and then refused Scott's request that they forward it to the *Liberator*. This forced Scott to write to Garrison to ask for his help in procuring the article.
[169] O. Scott, "True State of the Case.," *Liberator*, December 23, 1837, vol. 7, no. 52, p. 3, Gale, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

named after locations and were therefore neither auxiliaries nor replacements for the existing organizations. They were societies dedicated specifically to Methodist annual conferences, not a town, county, city, or state. These organizations were "temporary" because they were confined exclusively to abolitionizing the Methodist ministry. Religious antislavery organizations, in Scott's view, were a positive good and he endorsed Congregationalists and Presbyterians emulating the Methodist example if they did so "*not to divide*, but build up the Anti-slavery cause in *general*." Abolitionists, then, needed to set aside their religious differences and unite against slavery in a shared organization. "I cannot see why Universalists and Unitarians may not as properly unite with their evangelical neighbors," he wrote, adding that he opposed any "sectarian" effort that would "make a man's religious sentiments a test...."[170]

This underscores Scott's brand of antislavery unity. As seen, he believed in cooperating with all people on the principles they shared even if they differed dramatically in other respects. Scott's admission that Universalists and Methodists should unite on abolitionism underscores this reality. While both may have held opposing views on theological questions, they could find common ground on their antislavery principles. That was the ground on which they could work together. Unity, then, was a cooperation that came from the convergence of principle. This did not erase the distinctions between groups; it meant that people had to set those differences aside to advance what they shared.

In an act that would foreshadow an affair that shaped the next several months, the abolition Methodists at Lynn adopted a resolution during their final session that lamented the "persecutions" that "Rev. J.P. Lovejoy, and his friends in Illinois" had faced at the hands of anti-

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[170] Scott, "True State of the Case.," 3.

abolition mobs.[171] Of greatest concern to the ministers was the flagrant assault on the freedom of speech and freedom of the press, noting that Lovejoy's press had been destroyed and his life threatened. Seth Sprague, acting as president of the convention, called upon A.D. Merrill to lead the delegates in prayer on Lovejoy's behalf. La Roy Sunderland aptly summarized the scene. "The spectacle presented at that moment, in the Convention was interesting beyond description," he recalled, "There was a congregation of nearly a thousand Christians prostrated in solemn prayer, for a distant, persecuted brother, in another Church, and whose face perhaps, not one in that great assembly had ever seen."[172] In less than two weeks, Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy would be murdered by a mob.

During the last two months of 1837, Scott conducted two tours of Massachusetts as an antislavery agent, lecturing and raising money. The first tour, conducted from November 5 through November 21, focused primarily on northwestern and central Massachusetts. Scott usually lectured every day during this period and his addresses usually lasted between an hour and a half to two hours in length. Reflecting his views of antislavery unity, he did not confine his lectures to the abolition Methodists and Methodist churches. He spoke to diverse audiences and even lectured at a Unitarian church in Northfield. The trip also marked his return to Springfield, where he had the opportunity to lecture at both Methodist churches there: Wesley Chapel and Asbury Chapel. In all, he raised over $400 dollars for the antislavery movement, and he returned to Lowell on November 22 "*considerably worn down*."[173]

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[171] This resolution likely refers to Elijah Lovejoy, given the context of Alton Illinois, the antislavery press there, and the middle initial of "P." It is likely that either the secretary or the unnamed delegate that proposed the resolution mistakenly put "J" instead of "E."

[172] "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 4, 1837, vol. 2, no. 96, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[173] O. Scott, "A Faithful Laborer.," *Liberator*, January 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 4, 2022). Scott's November trip took him to Deerfield on the 5th, Heath on the 7th, Charlemont on the 9th, Heath again and Colerain on the 10th, Greenfield on the 13th and 14th, Northfield on the 15th, Greenfield again on the 16th, Springfield on the 17th, Wilbraham on the 19th, Springfield again on the 20th, and Brimfield on the

Scott spent the next several days recuperating in Lowell with his family before setting out on December 1 to resume his travels across Massachusetts. On the evening of November 30, he attended a commemoration of Elijah Lovejoy's death in Lowell before setting out for Andover on December 1. He returned to Lowell on December 5 to again commemorate Lovejoy's death before setting out for Worthington to lecture at his brother's church. During this trip from December 1 to December 16, Scott raised just under $200.[174]

The commemorations of Lovejoy's death on November 30 and December 5, however, left an impression on Scott. Speaking for the community of Lowell and for himself, he expressed his opinions on the entire affair in no uncertain terms to the *Liberator*:

> By all means, let the Alton press be set up again. Alton is the place above all others. Let a thousand fall before free discussion be given up in Alton! There are scores, if not hundreds, who would rejoice to set up the press, *or perish in the attempt*! Let some suitable person be selected forthwith, who will unfurl the banner of liberty over the body and blood of the *MARTYR*, or die like him at his post. If the principle of non-resistance be the best, (and this I am inclined to believe) then let it be adopted. .... I do not believe that another would lose his life, even if he were to go alone and unarmed.... But if he should – what of that? If there is ever a time to contend for our rights, it is when there is an attempt to deprive us of them; and if there is ever a place to contend for them, it is where there is an attempt to deprive us of them. *Victory or death*, or *both in Alton*! Public sentiment, through the press and by public meetings, will soon prepare the way for another effort in Alton.[175]

Scott's immediate reaction to the Alton affair embodied much of the antislavery worldview he developed between 1835 and 1837. The mob and government's inability to control it imperiled the success of the Wheel of Reform and had to be resisted because freedom of speech and freedom of the press helped inculcate the culture that made abolitionism possible. His fiery

21st. Scott's dual lecture on November 10 included a 1 pm lecture in Heath for two hours and then a second lecture a few hours later in Colerain.

174 Scott, "A Faithful Laborer.," 1. During the December 1-16 trip, Scott spoke at Andover on the 1st, Dracut on the 3rd, Worthington on the 9th, Ashfield on the 13th, Williamsburgh on the 13th and 14th, Westfield on the 15th, and Williamsburgh on the 16th.

175 O Scott, "A Faithful Laborer.," 1.

rhetoric – phrases such as “Victory or death” – underscores his belief that the antislavery movement could only succeed if it staked out a bold and intractable position.

At the end of 1837, Scott took to the *Zion’s Watchman* to issue an appeal to the “Methodist Abolitionists” and called on them to give the newspaper “*a liberal New Year’s present*” of anywhere from five to fifty dollars with the hope of raising three thousand dollars by the end of January 1838.[176] He also took to the *Zion’s Herald* to defend his view of conference rights from criticisms by Nathan Bangs and others in the *Christian Advocate*. This did not necessarily say anything new on the subject since it largely sought to “set our good brethren at New York right.” Scott, however, crystallized his belief that the inconsistent application of episcopal power was an integral problem for the church that needed to be resolved. Where he and other abolition Methodists had previously complained that they wanted equal standing with the Baltimore and New York Annual Conferences, Scott now took these claims further. By taking a stance on slavery and abolition, those conferences and the bishops had necessarily “done business for New England.”[177] Since Scott felt that the Methodist ministry had a moral obligation to oppose slavery, he saw anti-abolition regional or national action as making conferences in the free states complicit in the sin of slavery by virtue of their membership in the national church.

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[176] O. Scott, “A Word to Methodist Abolitionists.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, December 30, 1837, vol. 2, no. 104, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022).

[177] O. Scott, “Conference Rights.,” *Zion’s Herald*, December 27, 1837, vol. 8, no. 52, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). This article was also republished in the *Watchman*. See O. Scott, “Conference Rights.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, December 30, 1837, vol. 2, no. 104, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022). Scott reiterated his belief that bishops did not rule the annual conferences; they simply presided over the business. Here he repeated his belief that “the majority” should dictate the conference agenda. “He [Nathan Bangs] places the rights of the Bishop in one scale, and those of the whole conference in the other; and argues, that the bishop has the same claims upon the conference to do any business HE may wish to have done, ...”

The last article that Scott wrote in 1837 launched him into another short-lived but significant controversy. This episode, which pitted him against anti-abolitionists Rev. Hubbard Winslow and Dr. A.B. Snow, represented the culmination of everything that had transpired since the Cincinnati General Conference. It underscores how and why the murder of Elijah Lovejoy became a watershed moment that crystallized Scott's Christian, abolitionist, and republican worldview as well as his attitudes towards the Wheel of Reform more broadly.

The cause of the controversy had been a sermon that Winslow delivered at Bowdoin Street Church in Boston on the relationship between Christianity and reform. Winslow began his sermon with an exhortation of reform and a lengthy condemnation of slavery, which he admitted was a sin. However, it did not take long for him to insert the "But" qualifier.[178] After condemning abolitionists as acting on unchristian principles and saying that abolitionism was "more cruel, more fatal to all true liberty, more injurious to mankind, than any form of mere external slavery that ever afflicted humanity," Winslow turned his sights to Alton. He acknowledged that Lovejoy had the legal right to operate his press and said his death was lamentable. But he followed these concessions with the qualifier. Lovejoy, Winslow argued, had abandoned Christianity because he defied the mob and the civil authorities. Winslow's contention rested on the assumption that Christians should not resist persecution with violence; they should flee if persecuted and should submit to the will of civil authorities.[179]

By arming himself for self-defense, Winslow argued that Lovejoy had defied the will of a God who had made clear that abolitionism was not to be agitated. Winslow, however, took this

[178] "Mr. Editor", *Zion's Herald*, December 20, 1837, vol. 8, no. 51, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 4, 2022). Shortly after identifying as a type of abolitionist, he added, "But to the principle...." and went on the list a litany of grievances against the "ultra party."

[179] "Mr. Editor," p. 1. Winslow cited Matthew 26:52 – "All that take the sword shall perish with the sword." – and Matthew 10:23 – "when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another."

so far as to argue that self-defense was not morally permissible except in rare circumstances, since the right to protection rested with civil government. This view led Winslow to arrive at the conclusion of his overarching argument: "I consider the mournful disaster at Alton as the legitimate result of the operation of those unchristian principles and measures to which I have alluded." Lovejoy, then, was as responsible for Lovejoy's murder as the mob itself. Abolitionists, not the mobs, had therefore been the ones to "fill the land with violence and blood."[180]

As Winslow's sermon neared its terminus, he observed that the Alton episode was a cautionary tale. It illustrated the dangers of an absolute freedom of speech. Instead, Winslow said that he did not believe the liberty of the press was an absolute right, even in a republican government. "If you either do or publish any thing, right or wrong," he said, "as to strongly excite their [the people's] indignation, a mob is the natural consequence." After inciting the mob, abolitionists and these other "ultras" therefore called upon civil government "in vain" because they had angered the people's elected representatives. His brand of republicanism, deeply majoritarian and collectivist, rejected the concept of unalienable individual rights. Instead, rights were a privilege conferred to people by civil authorities and the majority could revoke those rights when its members heard something offensive to their sensibilities. "*Republican liberty*," he said at the end of his sermon, "is not the liberty of an isolated individual, ... [that] liberty to say and do just what one pleases – but liberty to say and do what the prevailing voice and will of the brotherhood will allow and protect."[181]

A.B. Snow, who forwarded Winslow's sermon to the *Zion's Herald* for publication, agreed with Winslow on the Alton affair. Snow, however, took an even more aggressively anti-

[180] "Mr. Editor," p. 1.
[181] "Mr. Editor," p. 1. Winslow argued a republic was "a great brotherhood" bound together by "concession." But his only examples entailed the minority offering concessions to the majority.

abolition position. Where Winslow had lamented that abolitionists would not self-regulate themselves into silence, Snow explicitly argued that speech was inherently an act of violence. "Personal criminations and acrimonious epithets are in principle, mental mobs and riots," he said in his prefatory remarks to Winslow's sermon, adding that the person who "talks and writes" in such a way was "accountable for using these his weapons, to the destruction of good order, equally with the man who assaults his neighbors with brickbats and stones,...." The worst part to Snow was that only the latter form of violence was illegal, although he suggested this was likely an oversight on part of lawmakers that could be fixed. Even though free speech could "hide beneath" a "cloak of law," he believed that "both [speech and physical violence] are weapons of torture and death."[182]

Winslow and Snow articulated a vision of Christianity and republicanism that was fundamentally incompatible with Orange Scott's worldview and his Wheel of Reform. Reform flowed from the churches to the people to the government and required a robust culture of free speech and viewpoint toleration to sustain it. Winslow and Snow made such a process impossible because they justified popular suppression of unpopular views on the basis that a republic was whatever the majority decided. Equating speech and physical violence offered anti-abolitionists and proslavery advocates the justification they needed for physical retaliation but must be viewed within the context of earlier anti-abolition critiques. If abolitionist rhetoric threatened to destroy church and state and their rhetoric was no different than physical violence, then a physical reprisal was not only acceptable in the name of preserving order; it was laudable.

Scott penned his first communication in this controversy on Christmas Day 1837. He methodically deconstructed what he considered to be the five key "sentiments" behind

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[182] A.B. Snow, quoted in "Mr. Editor," p. 1.

Winslow's sermon and Snow's remarks: that abolitionists were equally to blame for mob violence, that abolitionists were unchristian, that the North was unanimously abolitionist, that mobs were condemnable and justifiable at the same time, and that "republican liberty" rested on the whims of the majority.[183]

First, Scott objected to the claims that abolitionists should avoid harsh language on the basis that Jesus Christ, the Christian Apostles, John Wesley, and Adam Clarke had all used language that could be considered "acrimonious epithets." Jesus, Scott argued, had called people "children of the devil" while Wesley had excoriated slave traders as "African butchers." Second, Scott defended the Christian principles of abolitionism by discussing what he called its "principles" and "measures," showing that both were aligned with Christianity. This echoes the principle and policy paradigm that shaped Scott's understanding of abolitionism and antislavery cooperation. His principles were a belief that slavery was a sin in all circumstances and that it ought to be immediately abandoned. His measures were the means to accomplish this: promoting a "free discussion" to "enlighten" the public, establishing antislavery organizations that could place pressure on slavery, and petitioning the national government to take legal and constitutional action. Scott, however, saw the first two points as being connected and returned to the question of language and violence. Anti-abolitionists used the same kind of rhetoric that they deprecated in order to malign a movement that had "pursued a peaceful, lawful, and constitutional course" and then created a moral equivalency between abolitionists and mobs.

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[183] O. Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," *Zion's Herald*, January 3, 1838, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Although Winslow did not participate in this debate directly, he later penned an article for the *Boston Mercantile Journal* in which he tried to explain his sermon. Winslow only alluded to Scott by noting that he had seen "communications" in newspapers like the *Zion's Herald*. See "From the Boston Mercantile Journal.," *Liberator*, April 6, 1838, vol. 8, no. 14, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). It should also be noted, however, that Bryan Morse, a correspondent to the *Zion's Herald* in Lowell, penned an open letter to Winslow in May. See Bryan Morse, "To the Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," *Zion's Herald*, May 30, 1838, vol. 9, no. 22, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

Alton, in Scott's view, was more of an issue of "*liberty* and *property*" than it was "abolition and anti-abolition." But Scott did not leave his criticisms confined to a mere defense of the Christian character of abolitionism. He also took aim at the claim that speech could be an act of violence that justified physical retaliation. He underscored his disgust with this view by how he characterized it: "the blood of all the ancient and modern martyrs [may] be charged upon *their own hands*."[184]

The remaining three points of Scott's rejoinder must be viewed as an extension of this counterargument. While Scott said a great deal to prove that the North was not abolitionist, much of it was not necessarily new. Most significantly, however, Scott argued that anti-abolitionism wielded far more political and institutional power than abolitionism. It was able to project considerable influence across the free states by use of government action and mob violence. He then turned to recent examples: the gag rule in Congress and recent anti-abolition mob attacks on female abolitionists. But at the heart of this dispute – the "climax" as Scott put it – ultimately rested on their differing definitions of republican liberty.[185]

When it came to assailing the Snow-Winslow definition of republican liberty, Scott held nothing in reserve. In the same way he had viewed opponents like Thomas Whittemore and Daniel Whedon as favoring intricate theories over simple truth, Scott promoted simplicity in his counterargument. Snow and Winslow offered a convoluted definition of republican liberty, which ultimately, "In plain English" said that "mobs are an evil, but this evil is the natural consequence of a republican form of government" and that "No matter how righteous our cause may be, ... if we do or say any thing contrary to the feelings of the majority, a mob is the natural consequence, in republican governments." Stripping Winslow and Snow's statements of their

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[184] Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," 1.
[185] Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," 1.

complexities, Scott depicted it as a strictly majoritarian and collectivist political theory. Although he suggested that he considered it to be "a base slander upon republican institutions," he said that if their definition was true then he wanted nothing to do with republicanism. "Give us monarchial government," he demanded, "Better to be governed by *one despot*, than *many*."[186]

John Adams famously defined a republic as being a "government of laws, and not of men."[187] Orange Scott adopted this view. When attacking Winslow's definition of republican liberty, he emphasized that Winslow had, in his definition, said liberty was determined by "the brotherhood" rather than by "the *LAWS*." By making the majority into the arbiters of liberty, Scott wrote that this definition "implies a right in the people, which is above all law, to put down by violence and mobs what does not suit the taste of the majority!" Out of all the apologies for mob violence, Scott said this was the most "insidious" he had ever encountered because it reduced the government and laws to nothing more than "a rope of sand" that relegated individual rights to those of "mere name."[188]

While Scott took aim at Winslow's "cringing, compromising, time-serving apologies" and criticized what he called the "indifference of do-nothing 'conservatives,'" he reserved the bulk of his frustration for the group that he believed to be truly to blame: the civil authorities.[189] These officials and magistrates, he wrote, had committed a "criminal violation of obligation and neglect of duty" because they did not actively enforce the law and protect individual rights.

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[186] Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," 1. This statement echoes anti-democratic rhetoric from the American Federalists to traditional conservatives like Edmund Burke, who saw monarchy as preferable to direct democracy.

[187] John Adams, "Novanglus, February 6, 1775," http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/john-adams/novanglus-text-february-6-1775.php

[188] O. Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," *Zion's Herald*, January 3, 1838, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

[189] This characterization of "do nothing" conservatives is interesting, given Scott's own conservative tendencies. Unlike Winslow, Scott believed that conserving the past and the principles of existing institutions required aggressive action, not "indifference."

Instead, the civil authorities vacillated and allowed mobs to act and then, when it was too late, weakly deprecated them. He wrote:

> The civil authorities, wherever mobs have been raised, *might have suppressed them*. They have generally had time to make preparations for effectual resistance; but they have refused to do so. Out then, upon such recreant magistrates, with such denunciations as their conduct justly merits. There is power enough in the country, and in all sections of it, and always has been, to suppress all mobs; and this would have been done, but for criminal negligence on the part of civil authorities. The people have a remedy – let it be applied. Reform these guardians of our liberties, or reform them out of office. But while such men as Mr. Winslow make any thing an excuse or an apology for mobs, we may not expect the times will change for the better.[190]

Like an Edmund Burke, Scott viewed government as a system of trust in which the people entrusted power into the hands of their representatives. These politicians were not to be a mere weathervane to follow popular whims; they were elected to enforce and follow the laws. If people were dissatisfied, they needed to vote for new representatives and leaders.

Scott ended his counterargument against Snow and Winslow by appealing to "all good citizens, of all trades and professions" and calling for unity in preserving the rule of law. For Scott, freedom of speech needed to be preserved regardless of one's views on the actual issues being discussed. Referencing the parable of the wheat and the tares, Scott warned his readers that "While ministers and civil magistrates have been sleeping, *mobism* has been sowing tares among our republican institutions."[191]

The Snow-Winslow system was an existential threat to Scott's Wheel of Reform because it made progress unattainable. "We must ascertain, in this republican country," he mused, "whether to speak on any subject (Christian morals not excepted) will be agreeable to the tastes

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[190] Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," 1.
[191] O Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," 1. Scott's inclusion of ministers here is noteworthy because it shows how the Wheel of Reform could work both ways. Civil authorities needed to protect ministers who preached on moral issues, but ministers needed the courage to face the mobs regardless.

of the majority, before we presume to open our mouths." But if the collective majority could project its own will on the minority, that raised a very alarming question: what was the proper recourse when the majority was wrong? The Snow-Winslow definition of republican liberty made the majority the final say on all social and political questions because it could leverage the heckler's veto, intimidation, and extralegal violence against dissenting voices. As Scott aptly asked, "How on this principle, can men ever be reformed, where the majority happen to be wrong?" For him, the church existed as the vehicle to guide a misguided majority. It could not compromise. Earlier in the communication, he had defiantly proclaimed, "Slavery we have a *right* to discuss, and slavery we *will* discuss, come what may."[192] He returned to this theme at the close of his communication, invoking James 3:17 and a phrase that would become emblematic of Scottite abolitionism: "first *PURE*, then *PEACEABLE*."

A.B. Snow replied two weeks letter. Although he opened by denying that he had proclaimed abolitionists "mental mobocrats," he nevertheless reaffirmed his belief that speech was inherently violent by saying that the phrase was meant to imply "a common adage whosoever the coat should fit." Forced to justify his remarks on a broader ground than simple anti-abolitionism, Snow expanded on his concept of speech. He established what he termed the "*good order*" standard, which likened incendiary speech to physical violence whenever it threatened the preservation of order. His framework also suggested physical violence could be permissible against rhetorical violence if the former was aimed at preserving the order that the latter sought to destroy. Moreover, he later added that he believed the lack of laws regulating

[192] O Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow and Rev. Hubbard Winslow.," 1.

speech in the United States was oversight that needed to be rectified. In response, he called for new laws to penalize "the grossest insults" and offer victims "redress."[193]

Snow also took aim at Scott's claim that Jesus Christ, the Apostles, Wesley, and Clarke had wielded harsh language against sin and slavery. Reiterating his "good order" standard, Snow remarked, "What, that in order to rebuke sin, it is our duty to personally criminate with acrimonious epithets, even to the destruction of good order!"[194] Far from being people who rejected sin, the "whole tenor" of these men was "brotherly forbearance, peaceable intercourse, kindness and affection in reproof, meekness and mildness in our manners, benevolence and charity in our feelings." He made no effort to respond to Scott's cited quotes except to dismiss them as isolated cases. Snow, however, penned a very revealing statement that reflected the fundamental distinction between abolition Methodism and anti-abolitionism. "The gentleman says moral principles have not changed," Snow wrote of Scott, "but I say times and circumstances change the application of all things...."[195] This again underscores the morality of circumstance at the heart of the anti-abolition worldview. Anti-abolitionists like Snow took aim not only at Scott's abolitionism; they also attacked its underlying premise that the world was characterized by moral absolutes and its belief that challenging evil warranted strong language.

Next, to show that abolitionist principles inevitably led to violence, Snow asked Scott a series of six questions. These were each loaded queries designed to make the expected abolitionist response look uncompassionate and unreasonable. He inquired if slaveholders by

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[193] A.B. Snow, "A Reply To Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, January 17, 1838, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022)

[194] Snow did not deny that Jesus or the Apostles used "strong language"; he argued that they did not "always" do so.

[195] Snow, "A Reply To Rev. O. Scott.," 1. Snow said that Scott planned to "prosecute with tremendous violence, and at a sacrifice of the dearest interests of society" the principles which he as "a feeble and erring mortal" believed to be "moral principle!" By referring to Scott, this establishes that Snow, despite his initial denials, did believe abolitionist speech was inherently violent because it threatened the church and state.

inheritance were guilty of sin; if benevolent slaveholders were guilty of sin; if all slaveholders were obligated to instantly free their slaves; if northerners were required to "sit in judgment over the circumstances and consciences of all our brethren at the South"; if it was a duty to wield "harsh epithets" like the phrase men-stealers; and if it was a duty to "agitate our churches" to "sow discord" and distract the churches from "the conversion and salvation of souls...."[196]

As the article neared its end, Snow, like Scott, returned to the central question: what was republican liberty and was speech inherently violent? While Scott saw Elijah Lovejoy as a victim, Snow saw him as a perpetrator. "He who provoked the mob," Snow observed, "laid the foundation of the whole scene." If free speech was an issue at stake, it was only an issue insofar as abolitionist rhetoric threatened to destroy liberty by provoking mobs. Moreover, Snow again endorsed Winslow's definition of republican liberty, which he represented as simply being a reality for a nation with no standing army. To Snow, "popular will" was an important dimension to a republican form of government and the people were in turn entitled to retaliate when one group in the republic committed an "abuse of the liberties and privileges which the laws guarantee." Physical violence was simply "another channel" by which these abuses could be rectified since the United States lacked the legal power to censor speech.[197]

Snow ended his article by attacking Scott's Wheel of Reform. This critique rested on his view of circumstantial morality. Scott believed moral law to be a timeless reflection of God's law that needed to be promulgated regardless of circumstances or consequences. Advocates for circumstantial morality like Snow, by contrast, promoted the opposite view. Morality was subjective and based on specific circumstances. Snow, however, took this perspective to its logical end. Rather than agitate on moral evils in the present, reformers needed to wait until

[196] Snow, "A Reply To Rev. O. Scott.," 1.
[197] Snow, "A Reply To Rev. O. Scott.," 1.

another time. Snow, however, left this future date remarkably ambiguous and provided no specifics on the questions of *if* and *when* it was appropriate to challenge a majority that held erroneous views. Snow's argument rested on the premise that a person needed "to conform to the circumstances of the times...."[198] This view made morality even more subjective because it suggested that morality itself fundamentally evolved over time. In Snow's worldview, circumstances created by popular will and culture determined morality. Moral good, this framework suggested, was determined by the fleeting whims of the majority rather than Scott's standards of objective truth and existing divine revelation.

Scott wrote two separate replies that in total equaled roughly the same length as Snow's article. Although much of the first article challenged statements in Snow's communication which he believed had either misrepresented or mischaracterized him, one comment on Snow's exposition of republican liberty is especially illustrative of Scott's larger worldview. He first returned to his earlier examples – Jesus and the Apostles, the Wesley brothers, and the Founding Fathers – but also added William Lloyd Garrison to his list. This is significant because Garrison, Lovejoy, and other abolitionists had faced mobs and violence "because they dared to promulgate the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence – doctrines which the prevailing voice and will of the brotherhood would not allow and protect...." This not only drew yet another parallel between abolitionism and the primitive past; it also targeted the morality of circumstance and Snow's understanding of republican liberty. Scott once again united religion, abolitionism, and republicanism under the same umbrella to justify resistance to the prevailing culture. But the present culture only existed because the heads of church and state had made it possible. Both institutions had failed: the church for not boldly staking out moral ground and claiming its right

[198] Snow, "A Reply To Rev. O. Scott.," 1.

to speak and the state for not enforcing the rule of law. Civil authorities, regardless of whether they had a standing army, could enforce the law; they had chosen not to do so because the ministers and doctors of divinity had provided them with intellectual cover. He symbolized this connection by asking readers, “Spirit of ’76, where hast thou fled? And where is the mantle of WESLEY? O time serving, compromising generation!”[199] Snow and Winslow, then, had constructed a moral framework that ultimately created a society that had cast aside the timeless and connected principles of the American Revolution and early Methodism.

Scott’s second communication, written on January 29 and published on February 7, answered Snow’s six questions but generally said little that was new. Scott did, however, offer two interesting contributions to his worldview when he addressed Snow’s final two questions: whether one should be able to use harsh language against slaveholders and whether one should agitate against slavery. Scott reiterated his longstanding view that he believed people should “call things by their right names” and responded by asking Snow to tell him what slaveholders were if they were not “thieves, robbers, men-stealers, unjust, cruel, oppressors, &c.”[200] This underscores the simplicity that came with Scott’s brand of abolitionism. He advocated shining an uncompromising light on injustice and believed that the efforts to turn simple subjects into topics with excessive complexity and nuance was done only to obscure or excuse.

Second, Scott rejected Snow’s belief that abolition Methodists should be silent because speech produced discord. This disagreement rested on competing visions for what it meant to be a minister. “It is our duty to preach the TRUTH, and oppose ALL SIN,” he declared, reaffirming

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[199] O. Scott, “Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow.,” *Zion’s Herald*, January 31, 1838, vol. 9, no. 5, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott said the definition of republican liberty which Snow and Winslow had concocted was “one of the most outrageous sentiments ever uttered by man” and added that “No wonder that mobs fill the land, when divines will utter such sentiments, and Doctors endorse them!”
[200] O. Scott, “Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow.,” *Zion’s Herald*, February 7, 1838, vol. 9, no. 6, p. 4, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

his belief in the motto "first pure, then peaceable" and then noting that "Agitations and divisions are no evidence of a bad cause." The Gospel, Scott recalled, did not preach unity over principle, and he observed that even Jesus Christ himself had warned that his arrival would divide families and households. Scott then turned his sights to the main thrust of Snow's argument: that moral reformers should not act against the prevailing popular will. "The Doctor asks, 'Is there not a time and a place for all things?'" he asked, before declaring, "I answer, yes; and the time to oppose all sin is NOW, and the place is EVERYWHERE."[201] Scott, unlike Snow, had long believed that people were inclined towards worldliness and sin. It required the intervention of God and the church to change that trajectory. As a result, the churches and their reformer allies inevitably had an antagonistic relationship with popular will and prevailing sentiments. They could not wait for change because change could only come through their actions.

Scott's rebuttal received two lengthy replies from Snow in the February 14 and February 28 numbers of the *Zion's Herald*. However, Scott's February 7 article largely marked his final contribution to the controversy. Both their tones grew increasingly militant towards one another until both announced their intentions to end the debate. Snow made this views apparent in his February 14 article, complaining that Scott "will substitute ridicule for arguments...." Snow did, however, engage Scott's answer to his six questions during his February 28 article. In many respects, Snow relitigated much of his original reply from January but did make an interesting observation about his opponent. Orange Scott, he wrote, is "a leader in the cause of abolitionism." Snow then suggested that Scott's views could be inferred as the "sentiments of the whole party...." Snow, however, offered a telling rejoinder to Scott's belief that sin should be rebuked at all times and in all places. He invoked the case of a person who was drunk and said

[201] Scott, "Reply to Dr. A.B. Snow.," February 7, 1838, 4.

that a preacher should not minister to a drunkard while they were intoxicated. Instead, the minister and reformer should consider the "feelings and circumstances" in question rather than simply "stop and preach a moral lecture to him...." Snow further added that a minister should accept the reality that sometimes they could not prevail over popular will and he suggested they simply accept those failures. Nevertheless, Snow reiterated his earlier belief that abolitionists were to blame for the violence inflicted on them: "abolitionists had ... provoked their opponents to madness" and were "the cause of their own mal-treatment...." He did, however, finally address a point Scott had brought up repeatedly in the controversy: the gag rule. While he said all petitions and memorials should be accepted, he once again applied his rule of mobs to the conduct of Congress and said that "abolitionists may thank themselves for the course Congress has taken" since they were "doubtful sources of respectability."[202] In Snow's view, then, the right to speech was not only contingent upon *what* was said but *who* was saying it. Both cases, however, made individual rights dependent upon other people and institutional bodies.

"Permit me to present my compliments to Dr. Snow," Scott replied, proclaiming himself "highly entertained with his late productions on slavery, abolition, republican liberty, &c."[203] He then expressed his frustrations that Snow had misrepresented, misquoted, and mischaracterized him. And like Snow, who wondered aloud if the controversy was worth the time he had invested, Scott warned that he might not reply "for some time to come, as I am at present very much pressed with *more important matters*."[204] Scott, in withdrawing from the controversy, offered an interesting window into his state of mind at the time. He concluded his letter remarking on a

[202] A.B. Snow, "Reply to Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, February 14, vol. 9, no. 7, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[203] O. Scott, "Dr. A.B. Snow," *Zion's Herald*, February 28, 1838, vol. 9, no. 9, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).
[204] A.B. Snow, "Reply to Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, February 14, vol. 9, no. 7, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

related subject: the matter of "the D.D.'s as well as the M.D.'s" and, more specifically the "New York and Middletown broadsides" could not be allowed to pass "unheeded."[205] This was a significant development in the controversy because it reveals that he saw A.B. Snow as nothing more than a proxy for Nathan Bangs and Wilbur Fisk, the latter of whom he cited by name in the article. If he had to fight the anti-abolition intelligentsia, he intended to engage his actual opponents within the church hierarchy.

Since the end of the Cincinnati General Conference in 1836, Orange Scott had found himself at a crossroads that would determine not only his future, but the fate of the Methodist Episcopal Church itself. The New England Conference at Springfield had sought to promote unity in the church on anti-abolition terms and offered him the choice to retain his station or speak in favor of immediate abolitionism. Scott, committed to free speech and free discussion, made the decision that he would continue his antislavery activities regardless of the consequences. He carried these sentiments into his new station at Lowell, though he never lost sight of his original purpose as a Methodist minister and evangelist. His actions in the antislavery movement from the summer of 1836 through his controversy with A.B. Snow and Hubbard Winslow in early 1838, exposed the stark and irreconcilable differences emerging within 1830s Methodism. During this time, Scott had used his opportunities as an informal and formal antislavery agent to further integrate the abolition Methodists within the broader antislavery movement and simultaneously link New England Methodists with their antislavery brethren in the New York annual conferences. He clashed with leading anti-abolition voices, first with bishops Elijah Hedding and Beverley Waugh and later Snow and Winslow. In both cases, the

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[205] O. Scott, "Dr. A.B. Snow," *Zion's Herald*, February 28, 1838, vol. 9, no. 9, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Scott claimed that he had heard rumors that Snow had received a letter of support from Fisk. For A.B. Snow's final article, see A.B. Snow, "Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, March 14, 1838, vol. 9, no. 11, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

debate remained largely unchanged from his earlier controversy with Fisk and Whedon, but increasingly connected slavery and abolition with the looming issue of church government.

This was not a simple disagreement over how to best rid the nation of slavery. Abolition and anti-abolition Methodists fundamentally disagreed about the morality and moral culpability of slavery and even the very nature of morality itself. Scott saw morals as absolute truths while his critics advocated a more nuanced morality of circumstance. Witnessing firsthand what he saw as unconstitutional abuses of power, he advocated for a more popular democratic system of church government in which ordinary ministers and even the laity played a greater role in ecclesiastical affairs. Anti-abolitionists, by contrast, believed the bishops had the authority and responsibility to enforce institutional harmony when faced with controversial subjects. Even the very notion of republican liberty proved to be an area of disagreement. Abolitionists clamored for unfettered free discussion so that moral suasion could take its natural course. Anti-abolitionists, however, believed individual rights were contingent upon the will of the majority. The underlying question of the role of the Christian churches in a secular, republican society, then, was a central source of disagreement rather than a place of common ground. Scott believed that the churches and ministers should play an active role in society and, therefore, in politics as well. His opponents instead championed separation between religion and government and deprecated all religious efforts to challenge the popular support for slavery and the legal regime that claimed human beings as chattels.

These differences could be seen from the onset of the discussion that began with Scott's "Slavery No. I" in January 1835. The subsequent controversies that plagued the Methodist Episcopal Church did not create the newfangled crises over ecclesiastical power, conference rights, or republican liberty. The events that Scott participated in during this time – his ministry,

his lectures, his tours of the annual conferences – only clarified a division that already existed within the church. The Methodist Episcopal Church's desire to stifle this discussion and pacify the burgeoning discontent, then, did not have the desired effect. Silencing abolition Methodists only made them more defiant and more radical. In the next two chapters, we will explore how this continued to fracture an already divided church and examine how this emerging brand of Methodist radicalism fared when confronted with the radicalism of the broader antislavery movement.

Chapter 9: Orange Scott vs. William Lloyd Garrison, Part I

Orange Scott inaugurated the year 1838 by continuing to engage with the larger antislavery movement, attending an anniversary celebration in Springfield, Massachusetts in early January, the annual meeting of the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society in Reading, Massachusetts on January 23, and Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Boston from January 24-25. That month, in many respects, marked a culmination of the prior year and a half. Scott had not simply brought Methodists from across New England and even parts of upstate New York into the antislavery column; he had aided the movement by raising funds and promoting it across denominational lines. The annual report of the state society's board of managers credited Scott as one of the ten abolitionists who had "greatly advanced" the cause alongside names such as James G. Birney, Wendell Phillips, and the Grimké sisters.[1]

Rev. Hubbard Winslow's sermon on reform and his definition of republican liberty became an early topic of conversation at the Boston meeting, and Scott was one of the speakers who addressed it. In his view, the problem with Winslow's sermon rested upon the fact that Winslow was a minister who promoted the idea that ministers should not challenge moral evil in society. Here Scott crystallized his understanding of the Wheel of Reform and his belief that ministers stood at the vanguard. George McDuffie or the political parties could try and strongarm abolitionists into silence, but that would fail because, as Scott put it, "We all know better."

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[1] T.P.J., "Old Hampshire County Awake!," *Liberator*, January 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022); Luther Boutell, "Middlesex Co. A.S. Society.," *Liberator*, February 2, 1838, vol. 8, no. 5, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022); "Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society: Presented January 24, 1838," Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022), 50-54. Scott did not play a critical a role at these meetings, although he was said to have "ably addressed" the crowd at Springfield and spoke with "spirit and energy" during the meeting in Reading. In Boston, Scott served on the Business Committee alongside William Lloyd Garrison, Jotham Horton, Oliver Johnson, A.A. Phelps, and others.

However, a minister championing “modern dastardly expediency” and the “cringing, time-serving spirit that would favor nothing that is unpopular” represented a completely different threat. The pulpit of Hubbard Winslow had turned the freedom of speech and freedom of the press, the actual vehicles for moral reform, into “the liberty of mobs and lawless violence.” Essentially, the tools in a republican government to inculcate Christian morality became, in Winslow’s worldview, the tools for the destruction of moral reform. “When the pulpit refuses to give ‘a certain sound,’” he said forebodingly, “it is striking at the foundation of all decision of character.” The pulpit that supported “corrupt sentiment,” he further warned, was the true “cause for alarm.” To him, there was only one solution. Members of the antislavery society needed to refuse to “swallow such a pill” and instead “put that sermon into the hopper, and grind it out, and again put it into the hopper and grind it out, and scatter it to the four winds of heaven.”[2]

In January 1838, Scott and William Lloyd Garrison stood united and even served on the Business Committee of the state society together. This unity, however, would not long endure. By the end of the year, Scott found himself engaged in a public debate with Garrison and alienated from many of his former allies. While Scott engaged Garrison, he also continued his central directive: the purification of his church. But the period of 1838 through 1842 marked a change. Scott not only battled anti-abolition Methodists; he also clashed with the more radical members of the antislavery movement. In doing so, he at once became a radical abolitionist schismatic to conservative Methodists and a conservative Methodist schismatic to radical abolitionists. These extremes saw him as a divider of his church and his cause.

[2] “Proceedings” in Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society: Presented January 24, 1838, Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 11, 2022), xxv-xxvi. As Scott put it, “According to that sermon, no moral reform is to be commenced, till the majority are reformed.” It is important to note, however, that Winslow had made clear that a majority should largely be left to their own devices on issues of morality.

This chapter and the one that follows it chronicle two debates: Scott's clash with anti-abolition Methodism and his argument with one of the men that made him an abolitionist. They will explore the themes of conservatism and radicalism and how these two elements converged to compose the totality of Scott's unified evangelical and antislavery worldview. Scott could be seen as a radical and a conservative, and he, in many respects, saw himself that way. For Scott, his radicalism stemmed from his conservatism. He believed in conserving what he saw as the idyllic principles of the past while supporting aggressive, even divisive, action in pursuit of that goal. Moreover, he understood that problems with moral corruption in the present did not have a simple political solution: he did not fully embrace the political antislavery movement of Gerrit Smith and James G. Birney, even as he endorsed it. As we have seen, Scott believed change could only occur through the Wheel of Reform and through a joint process of moral suasion and political action. Like an Edmund Burke, Scott saw change as an organic process. He opposed what he had aptly termed the "'do nothing' conservatives," but also believed a true conservative was a radical because conserving – or restoring – the righteous principles of the past amid a corrupted present required decisive action, forceful language, and uncompromising character.

Scott brought this attitude to bear upon both the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Garrisonians from 1838 through 1842. These years greatly tested Scott's conception of unity, both in church and reform. These conflicts eventually ended in fragmentation: first of the united antislavery movement and then his own denomination. These debates were fundamentally interconnected because they raised questions about association. Scott was forced to ask himself whether he belonged in the same antislavery movement as a William Lloyd Garrison or a Henry C. Wright at the same time he began to ask himself if he belonged in the same religious organization as slaveholders and anti-abolitionists. In both cases, the Garrisonians and anti-

abolition Methodists promulgated principles and policies that would have, like Winslow and A.B. Snow, obliterated his entire worldview and made his Wheel of Reform obsolete.

These debates rested upon that underlying point. However, the specific ways that it manifested will be a central element of this chapter and the next one. The debate with Garrison ultimately boiled down to two interwoven issues: what Scott called "no human government theory" and "modern" women's rights. These overlapped considerably with the issues that caused the larger fracturing of the antislavery movement, but it is worth studying Scott independent from that larger schism because his connection to Garrison offers unique insight into the broader division. As a man who came to abolitionism because of Garrison, Scott held him in high esteem regardless of their disagreements. In many respects, he had seen what Garrison had helped to build in America as a continuation of the work begun in Great Britain by men like John Wesley. His increasing divergence with Garrison after 1838 therefore posed a significant personal and intellectual challenge to him. Ultimately, Scott concluded that he and his allies, not Garrison or his disciples, were the true Garrisonians.

In the continued debate with the Methodist Episcopal Church, Scott increasingly hardened the anti-episcopal views he had begun to seriously entertain in the fall of 1837. Moreover, he continued to endorse and facilitate larger cooperation among abolition Methodists across the annual conferences. Circumstances only hardened his defiance of the leadership, as Elijah Hedding, Wilbur Fisk, and other authorities continued to promote of their policy of silence. They enforced this by cracking down on all antislavery activity taken in a ministerial capacity. This created a crisis in which Scott and many of his abolition Methodist allies faced potential punishment and censure for the simple act of being abolitionists within the church. In 1838, anti-abolition Methodists eventually shifted their strategy away from censorship and

towards a far more alluring policy of "pacification," a seeming compromise between abolitionism and anti-abolitionism. Ultimately, the 1840 General Conference proved to be the breaking point. Isolated from the broader antislavery movement and unable to overcome a united proslavery and anti-abolition front within his own church, Scott began to accept the reality that slavery's demise remained a distant goal. As a result, his debates with Garrison and anti-abolition Methodism in the late 1830s set the stage for Scott's conduct in the 1840s.

Early in 1838, however, Scott's antislavery activities across the Methodist Episcopal Church drew the attention of leading church authorities and their supporters. Nathan Bangs, as editor of the church's official newspaper, took to the *Christian Advocate* to condemn Scott. In an article entitled "LOOK AT THIS!!," Bangs reintroduced his readers to Scott as "a supernumerary preacher" who was "in practice a traveling anti-slavery agent." Bangs took issue with Scott's defiance of the mob that killed Elijah Lovejoy. By seeking to reestablish an antislavery press and defend property rights, Scott was inciting violence. More to the point, Bangs objected to the idea of considering Lovejoy a martyr since he died for abolitionism rather than Christianity. "Abolition," Bangs wrote, "is not Christianity." Whether cynical or sincere, Bangs argued that Scott's support for physical force in self-defense meant that he had abandoned his Christian faith.[3] This article is significant for two reasons. First, it suggested that Christianity was synonymous with pacifism and incompatible with abolitionism. Second, Bangs declared that

[3] Nathan Bangs, quoted in "Look at This.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 3, 1838, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Ant-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Despite powerful enemies, Scott was not without his share of support. The *Watchman* became a forum for pro-Scott counterattacks from several writers and the Utica Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society passed 11 resolutions on the subject when they met in January 1838. See W.C. Rogers, "Assaults on the Character of Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 3, 1838, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). For Sunderland's remarks, see "Look At This.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 3, 1838, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). For other articles, see Ventriloquist, "Another Misrepresentation.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 3, 1838, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Ant-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022), Beth of the Troy Conference, "More Misrepresentations.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 3, 1838, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Ant-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

Scott had abrogated his ministerial duties by promoting abolitionism and had violated Christian teaching in doing so. This attack would not be the last; others like Wilbur Fisk took to official Methodists newspapers to attack Scott as those same papers closed their columns to him.[4]

If Bangs' article was an effort to dissuade Scott from further antislavery action inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church, it failed. In February, Scott and the Lynn Convention's Committee of Arrangements announced a national convention of abolition Methodists in Utica, New York on May 2 and May 3. It aligned perfectly with the American Anti-Slavery meeting in New York on May 8 by design. The committee, however, did not simply draft an itinerary of events; they explained why the convention was going to take place. Slavery inside the church was the principal reason. Scott, however, left his mark on the announcement as the appeal on slavery quickly pivoted to complaints about church government. The report declared:

> And according to the doctrine laid down and acted upon by two of our bishops, and advocated by some of our editors and ministers, we have no right, as conferences, to express any sentiment *against* slavery, though called upon by thousands of our own members. Hence the necessity of conventions! Southern Conferences may take any ground they please in favor of slavery – they may prostrate the Discipline, as the Baltimore and Georgia Conferences have done, and require of candidates for orders, unauthorized pledges as the New York Conference has done, and bishops are ready to put such business to vote! The Georgia Conference has lately passed resolutions...while the Northern Conferences must be *dumb*![5]

[4] "Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, March 17, 1838, vol. 3, no. 11, p.3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Faced with attacks from Bangs, Fisk, and others, Scott wrote a reply to the *Christian Advocate,* but the paper rejected it. Although later published in the *Watchman*, Scott complained that "My character is suffering." La Roy Sunderland aptly summarized the situation: "Misrepresented, falsely charged, and injured,..., the right of self-defence is thus denied him."

[5] "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 24, 1838, vol. 3, no. 8, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "Fifth Anniversary Of the American Anti-Slavery Society.," Zion's Watchman, February 24, 1838, vol. 3, no. 8, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). The Committee of Arrangements was composed of Orange Scott, George Storrs, Jared Perkins, La Roy Sunderland, and D.B. Randell. The announcement about the Utica Convention also appeared in the *Zion's Herald*. See "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Zion's Herald*, February 14, 1838, vol. 9, no. 7, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

The committee argued that the national church had curtailed the rights of annual conferences and their members to act according to the Church Discipline. Worse, they had done so selectively. This warranted "a great, central, Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention" that could determine the necessary steps "to bring the Methodist Episcopal Church up to the pure Wesleyan Methodism, on the subject of slavery!"[6] This underscores an important dimension to Scott's worldview as well as the mindset of abolition Methodists more broadly. They believed that their church had been corrupted by slavery, but also believed that same corruption was a perversion of the institution. The solution, then, required returning to the past and its pure principles. In the case of Methodism, it meant returning to the early church and the ideals of John Wesley.

During the opening months of 1838, the struggle between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists hinged upon this issue of conventions. Scott offered his first public commentary on that debate on March 10 and March 13 in a pair of articles for the *Zion's Watchman*. As he had done in 1835, Scott again turned to Wilbur Fisk, "The Middleton '*Agitator,*'" as his principal opponent. Fisk, it should be noted, had published articles critical of Scott, the abolition Methodists, and their antislavery conventions in the *Christian Advocate*, and Scott's articles were his rebuttal. Fisk's argument rested on the premise that these antislavery conventions – like the one at Lynn in 1837 – were unauthorized and therefore illegitimate. Scott, however, boiled the entire struggle down to a simple question of "liberty." For him, the anti-abolition Methodists had, since 1835, methodically closed the door to *any* potential antislavery action. They had closed the columns of official newspapers, they had condemned them at the general conference, they had curtailed their ability to act in conference capacity, and they were now attempting to prohibit abolitionists from forming antislavery societies within their own annual conferences. In

[6] "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 24, 1838, vol. 3, no. 8, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

other words, the church was systematically suppressing the liberties of its ministers and members.[7]

As evidenced by Elijah Hedding and Beverley Waugh at the antislavery annual conferences, Scott observed that these actions were selective. For example, he pointed to Methodists temperance societies and temperance conventions. No one in the church opposed them, even if there was no specific provision in the Church Discipline that authorized them. In Scott's view, the Discipline did not need to authorize them because the temperance societies were a simple manifestation of the Discipline. Because church teaching condemned drunkenness, ministers and members could act in a religious capacity against it. Since slavery was condemned by that same Discipline, it stood to reason that church antislavery societies were also permissible. "Drunkenness and slavery are put in our Discipline in the same light," he concluded, "if, then, temperance societies and conventions are proper, so are anti-slavery societies and conventions." In one sense, Scott adopted a loose construction of the Discipline to argue that things may be permissible even if not explicitly authorized by it. However, it is important to integrate this within its proper context. Scott believed things not explicitly authorized by the Discipline – such as conference societies, camp meetings, and protected meetings – were permissible so long as they advanced the teachings laid out in the Discipline. There was "no impropriety in either" temperance or antislavery societies, then, because both promoted the principles of the church.[8]

Scott then turned his attention to the charges that he and the abolition Methodists were schismatics. Both articles dealt heavily with this topic. When reading them together, a seemingly contradictory perspective emerges. His March 10 article, "Division of the Church," opened by

[7] O. Scott, "Unauthorized Conventions in the Church.," *Zion's Watchman*, March 24, 1838, vol. 3, no. 12, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[8] Scott, "Unauthorized Conventions in the Church.," 3.

taking aim at what he called “the leaders of the great conservative party” and their “*deep laid* plan” to “crush or cure abolitionists....”[9] But his March 13 communication, “‘Unauthorized Conventions in the Church,’” justified abolition Methodist conventions on the basis that there was nothing “revolutionary” about them.[10] Scott postured himself as a radical challenging a conservative establishment but then justified his measures on the grounds that they were not radical or subversive. While one could read these articles as simple rhetorical posturing, the fact that they entered the columns of the *Zion’s Watchman* side-by-side suggests a deeper significance. A more nuanced reading of the twin Scott articles makes the most sense because, as we will see, it echoes much of the other things he said about conservatism and radicalism.

Most significantly, Scott did not view radicalism and conservatism as two opposite poles on a spectrum. Radicalism was simply a mechanism and means, not an end unto itself. It served a conservatism that was fundamentally opposed to the “do nothing” conservatism of a Hubbard Winslow or A.B. Snow. This explains how Scott could simultaneously assail his church and then claim he was not revolutionary. He attacked conservative Methodists not because he wanted to transform the church through innovation; he condemned them because of what they were trying to conserve. In his view, they were trying to conserve an existing power dynamic within the Methodist Episcopal Church and preserve it from antislavery disruption. They did so without regard to first principles. Scott opposed this system of Methodism that emerged in the 1830s, which led his critics to consider him a radical, a schismatic, and a revolutionary.

Scott, however, did not see himself in that light. He saw his measures as radical in the sense that they were directed against the existing ecclesiastical establishment, not against the

[9] O. Scott, “Division of the Church.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, March 24, 1838, vol. 3, no. 12, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[10] Scott, “Unauthorized Conventions in the Church.,” 3.

organization itself. These radical actions, then, were only radical because they challenged the problems in the present. They did not discard everything that came before. Scott ended his March 10 article by invoking “the pure principles of WESLEYAN METHODISM” and, in his March 13 communication, complained that Nathan Bangs stood in opposition to “the storm of *old Wesleyan principles*.”[11] These assertions are crucial. Scott created a clear juxtaposition between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists, with the former standing for ancient Wesleyan Methodism and the latter protecting modern Methodism. The language also underscores another significant point. These “principles” were both “old” and “pure.” As we saw with his earlier ministry, Scott was neither a materialist nor a rationalist. In his debate with Thomas Whittemore, Scott had demonstrated himself to be a person driven by a belief in human experience. In that sense, he was strongly conservative because he did not believe in unmooring oneself from the past and constructing rationalistic and innovative theories and frameworks. The same can be said with this emerging crisis of unity within the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery. Scott’s purported radicalism stemmed from his desire to go backwards in time. He opposed the conservatism of the present that sought to preserve institutions while abandoning the principles that those institutions once represented. Institutions were important to Scott, hence his reluctance to call for secession, but he ultimately believed they existed to carry principles into the actual world. In that sense, Scott was a radical conservative because he was committed to conserving the principles of the past and willing to deploy what others viewed as radical and divisive tactics in the present to accomplish that end.

[11] Scott, “Division of the Church.,” 3. O. Scott, “Unauthorized Conventions in the Church.,” 3. Scott further illustrated this view in his “Division of the Church” article, claiming “Methodist abolitionists” stood beneath “the *TRUE WESLEYAN ANTI-SLAVERY STANDARD*!” They, and not modern anti-abolition Methodism, were the true heirs of Wesley.

Scott also employed arguments he had used in the past to defend antislavery conventions and the abolition Methodists. In the same way he had invoked the U.S. Constitution as an antislavery document, Scott turned the tables on his Methodist rivals by presenting anti-abolition Methodists as the real schismatics. Given that church policy was selectively biased against abolition Methodists, he presented antislavery agitation as simply reclaiming rights that other Methodists already enjoyed. To Scott, abolition Methodists had no ambitions of controlling the church or compelling allegiance to their cause; they simply wanted to follow the dictates of their consciences. "When have we ever pretended that we have a right to MONOPOLISE the whole of our official paper," he asked readers before listing a host of other examples and concluding, "*The true schismatics are known by their fruits*!"[12] Conventions were simply a logical response – "our only alternative" – when anti-abolitionists had closed all the other avenues. If abolitionists were to fulfill what Scott viewed as "our solemn duty" and "bear our testimony against slavery," then they needed to the hold conventions. He crystallized this argument by juxtaposing anti-abolitionist censorship with his belief in "a legal, moral, and Methodistical right, to assemble ... in the Church and to the country."[13]

Scott was not alone in these views. Abolition Methodists like Jotham Horton, George Storrs, and Phineas Crandall spent the opening months of 1838 continuing this debate with the anti-abolitionists. New voices also entered the fray. Cyrus Prindle, a minister from Mechanicsville, New York, took an increasingly vocal position in favor of conference rights while Luther Lee, a pugnacious preacher from Fulton, New York, joined Scott in directing his

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[12] In another example of Scott's penchant for turning the tables on critics, Scott wondered aloud if Wilbur Fisk had violated his own standard, suggesting that anti-abolitionism should be classified the same way since it touched on abolitionism. "And has not the President of the Wesleyan University, another salaried church officer, left his 'regular work' to write on abolition?" Scott asked. He did the same for Nathan Bangs.
[13] Scott, "Unauthorized Conventions in the Church.," 3.

rhetorical and oft-polemical fire upon Wilbur Fisk. Both Prindle and Lee would become central pillars in the movements against slavery and episcopal government. That spring, Scott published his most important and consequential work since his General Conference Address, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*. This work, a 150-page pamphlet on slavery and church government published by D.H. Ela, went to press in April. Abolition Methodists adopted an aggressive marketing campaign. Before it even was published, the *Zion's Watchman* touted it and informed readers it could be acquired in Boston, Springfield, Providence, or New York City for 50 cents and offered a 20% discount if a person bought copies to resell. All profits went directly "to the anti-slavery cause."[14]

Although this work was intended for a Methodist audience, Scott's pamphlet caught the attention of the larger antislavery movement. William Lloyd Garrison offered his own favorable review of the work in the *Liberator*, which he concluded with a request: "We ask for its widest circulation, especially among our Methodist brethren." In the same way Scott's address at Cincinnati had demonstrated the ways in which abolition Methodism could cross denominational lines, Garrison's review showed that Scott continued to hold that same level of influence in 1838. As a result, it is important to explore the work that Garrison himself believed to be "a succession of triumphs."[15]

In the preface to the *Appeal*, which Scott wrote on March 30, 1838, he argued that the emergence of abolition Methodism marked a new chapter in the history of his church. His work, he explained, consolidated the movement's beliefs and worldview, offering them "a more permanent existence than that of newspaper articles...." The goal, then, was not necessarily to

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[14] "An Appeal to the Methodist E. Church.," *Zion's Watchman*, April 12, 1838, vol. 3, no. 13, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[15] "An Appeal to the Methodist E. Church.," *Liberator*, April 6, 1838, vol. 8, no. 14, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

produce new arguments but make preexisting facts available in a manner that was "very convenient for reference" and would enable abolitionists the ability to have facts at their disposal "without going over a host of newspapers, and not a few books."[16] Nevertheless, it refined and synthesized the converging strands of abolition Methodism and anti-episcopal Wesleyanism.

The pamphlet was subdivided into five parts: slavery and the church, the Bible argument, the Cincinnati Conference, conference rights, and a collection of miscellaneous articles. While Scott said the views in the work were his own, he added that he believed they were "the sentiments of Methodist abolitionists generally." The work, however, did have "original matter," and Scott touted the material in Part 1 – Slavery and the Church – as being an example of this.[17] His work carried the same urgent tone that characterized much of his writing and rhetoric. "This Appeal has been prepared in view of the day of final accounts," he wrote of that time when he believed he would have to answer for the deeds of his life at "the judgment seat of Christ." This belief, when coupled with the compilatory nature of the project, led Scott to some introspection on his earlier conduct. After finishing the project, he admitted that he had not always used "the *best words*" and insisted that he had not "intended" to treat others in an "unnecessarily severe" manner. He maintained that he had not "impeached the motives of any brother" before qualifying that assertion with the disclaimer, "At any rate, he [the author] has not intended to do this."[18]

An *Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, then, largely reinforced and reiterated the ideals which Scott had espoused in his first three years as an abolition Methodist. In some cases, he directly quoted earlier articles.[19] However, the organizational structure of the pamphlet also

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[16] Rev. O. Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Boston: David H. Ela, Printer and Publisher, 1838), HeinOnline, p. 3.
[17] Scott believed the original material in Part 1 was "alone worth the price of the work."
[18] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 3-4.
[19] Scott incorporated his earlier juxtaposition of the "Achan's among us" and the "Achan of old."

crystallized his worldview because it helped join what had previously been disconnected elements into a single work. Within the first pages alone, for example, he reiterated his support for racial equality, his belief that slavery had corrupted church and state, his conception of moral reform, and his belief in moral absolutes.[20] A brief overview of the pamphlet's overarching argument is necessary because it was as much a warning for the Methodist Episcopal Church as much as it was a treatise on abolitionism.

Part I focused on the relationship between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the peculiar institution. Reiterating his belief that all reform began with Christian churches, Scott opened his appeal by stating that "The Methodist Episcopal Church holds a large share of the moral power of this nation."[21] As we have seen with the Wheel of Reform, Scott believed that the churches needed to wield their influence and persuade the public. Because churches could not remain neutral on moral questions, he believed that the church had, intentionally or not, "been on the *wrong side*." Since becoming an abolitionist, his plan had been to purify the church and put it on what he saw as the right side of that question. At this juncture, Scott crystallized a paradigm that he had previously referred to as "principles" and "measures," arguing that the church needed to embrace its purportedly antislavery "convictions" and carry them into "practice."[22] This is significant because it further introduces another dimension to Scott's worldview: the dichotomy between what I term "principle" and "policy." Principles –amorphous,

[20] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 5-10, 18.
[21] On the issue of racial equality, Scott touted natural rights. "The blacks are born as free as the whites," he wrote, linking this idea with his belief in the supremacy of divine law to human law. "No matter then if ten thousand human legislatures make laws, saying that children are slaves – of what avail are they before God?" he asked. "Legislation can never make that which is morally wrong, politically right."
[22] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 5-9. Scott explained this paradigm with a question: "Are we doing as much as ever to get rid of slavery?" He cited a minister praying for slaves as an example of action.

unchanging philosophical and theological concepts – included the broad ideals that a person held, such as a belief in natural rights and human equality.

Policies were the tangible ways that people implemented their principles in the real world. Scott illustrated the way this worked by briefly setting aside the label of abolitionist and turning to the manifestations of antislavery principle, asking readers, "are we doing *any thing* to purge the Church and save the country?"[23] This dichotomy proved significant because it influenced Scott's understanding of unity. For Scott, people of shared principle could differ on policy because policies were a manifestation of a person's conscientious application of principle. In the later struggle with the Garrisonians, this would become an essential consideration.

The principle-policy paradigm connected to another important component of Scott's worldview that he established in Part I and would influence other parts of the *Appeal*. His thesis in the first section, and in the work more generally, was that the Methodist Episcopal Church had departed from the ground upon which it had been founded. He encapsulated this view by juxtaposing "ancient and modern Methodism" and explaining of how the latter had betrayed the former. This framework is essential towards understanding how Scott could simultaneously be both a conservative and a radical. Part I offered an exhaustive collection of quotations and documents designed to show the differences between an earlier Methodism that Scott viewed as truly Wesleyan and its modern version. Here he explained what he meant by the term "modern Methodism," defining it as a recent innovation of the past ten years because it was "unlike" what he called "the principles of Wesley...."[24] The emphasis on Wesley is crucial towards seeing how Scott understood the interplay between conservatism and radicalism. Wesley was representative

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[23] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 5. Scott further defined principle as unchanging when he observed that circumstances could not change them. "Neither human laws nor geographical boundaries can change moral principles." See Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 8.

[24] Scott argued that church defending slavery would have been unthinkable "even ten years ago."

of both ancient Methodism *and* modern abolitionism. But, more significantly, modern abolitionism was not, in Scott's view, a modern phenomenon. It was "*as ancient as* John Wesley" because he too was an "ultra" on the subject.[25] Scott believed his own actions, which anti-abolition Methodists had deemed to be radical and schismatic, were conservative because he was committed to preserving older Wesleyan principles from modern influence and restoring ancient Methodist policy in church government to better realize its first principles. His perceived radicalism in the present, then, only sought to reclaim something that he believed had been lost.

Scott argued that the old antislavery ground of the Methodist Episcopal Church as it existed in the late 1700s had been gradually lost over time. He referenced documents from not only John Wesley, but also American Methodism to support his claim. He then contrasted this earlier antislavery sentiment with the more modern actions of the Cincinnati General Conference in 1836 and the proslavery annual conferences in 1837.[26] Although modern Methodism was "stained with blood, and haunted with the groans of *deathless spirits,*" Scott noted that these same critiques could also be applied to American Christianity more generally. Although he saw Methodism as an early opponent of slavery, that did not mean he thought Methodists were uniquely antislavery. For example, he touted an address from the Kentucky Presbyterian synod and used it to draw a contrast with the shortcomings in his own church.[27]

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[25] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 5-8.

[26] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 9-19. In a section bridging Methodism of then with the Methodism of the present entitled "The Retrograde March of the Church," Scott argued that the Church had been on a "down hill course" until they had arrived "to the bottom of the hill...." He looked to the writings of Wesley, church statements from 1780, 1784, and 1785, and the Church Discipline of 1801 for support.

[27] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 19-29. Scott cited James G. Birney as an influence and incorporated quotes from southern ministers to criticize their justification of slavery as a means evangelize Africans. "Is this a Christian land to them, as a general thing?" he asked. Contrasting Kentucky Presbyterians and northern Methodists, he noted, "Here we see Presbyterian ministers in a slave holding State standing almost as erect as the abolitionists, while we see a General Conference of Methodist ministers bowing a crouching to slavery!"

In Part II, Scott turned to a familiar ground: the argument over whether slavery was authorized by the Bible. Although Scott had been influenced by Birney's view of the American churches, Scott invoked Theodore Dwight Weld and his "unanswerable argument" as the central influence for this section.[28] Here he built on his belief that modern Methodism had abandoned its first principles. In addition to reiterating his belief in the Wheel of Reform, he argued church disengagement had "been to slavery like a dew of heaven." "The poison-tree of slavery was indeed struck by the lightnings of truth in the days of Coke and Asbury," he added, "but its broken limbs have been so well adjusted by our modern divines and learned doctors, that it has more than recovered its former strength and vigor."[29] This illustrates a connection between Scott's understanding of the past and the present and his longstanding opposition to elitist theories and excessively complicated hermeneutics.

Wilbur Fisk and Elijah Hedding were two examples of how church inaction and convoluted theoretical frameworks had empowered slavery. Scott then engaged in a brief but pointed exegesis of 1 Timothy 6:1-2 that offers a window into his approach to the Bible in 1838. Although his way of reading the Bible embraced what he called "the general design and spirit of the Gospel," he nevertheless anchored his exegesis to a wary mindfulness of not "doing violence" to the text. The "doing violence" standard remained the same one he had used in his critiques of Universalism in the 1820s. His belief in looking to the "spirit" of the Gospel was also limited. It applied specifically to passages with ambiguity, as seen in the case where St. Paul seemingly sanctioned slavery. Because the word for slave – *Doulos* – had multiple meanings depending on context, Scott argued that the reading of the text should favor the interpretation

[28] Scott quoted over four and a half pages of text from Weld, lamenting he could not include more. He also cited La Roy Sunderland's works on the Bible and the Kentucky Synod.
[29] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 33-45.

which he argued was “most in accordance with analogy of revealed truth....”[30] However, Scott did not limit his argument to verbiage alone. He incorporated biblical proof to illustrate that slave was usually the intended meaning when accompanied by “yoke” or a similar phrase. In this sense, Scott argued that St. Paul was juxtaposing slavery in its first verse with general servitude in the second. Only 1 Timothy 6:1 used duolos with “yoke”; the second verse did not. While even Scott admitted that this did not definitively prove anything, it made it far less “certain” that slaveholders were the ones discussed in the second verse.[31] If a text was ambiguous, Scott concluded that it should be analyzed in accordance with general biblical principles: principles that were incompatible with chattel slavery.

While one reading of this biblical analysis could argue that Scott strayed from his earlier literalistic “self-evident” exegesis, his ruminations on Timothy in 1838 connect with his earlier hermeneutics. The connective thread was intention. Scott had criticized Whittemore for changing the meaning of the text to suit his preferred preferences. With the Timothy passage, Scott argued that the passage was ambiguous and therefore required consultation of the overarching message of the Gospel and the Bible. However, Scott still anchored this approach to the actual text. Where he had said he believed Universalism had done “violence” to the Bible, he argued his analysis of Timothy did not change or contradict the text: it was just one possible interpretation. Both the proslavery and antislavery interpretations had the potential to be wrong; but Scott felt

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[30] 1 Timothy 6:1-2 was a popular verse to support slavery, which read, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.”

[31] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 45-47. Scott argued that the first verse told slaves to be loyal to their masters not necessarily because slavery was right, but because Christians were supposed to bear witness and suffer injustice, citing Jesus’ admonition to turn the other cheek “If a man smite thee on one cheek, turn the other; not because any man has a right to smite thee, but ‘that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.”

that if he were to commit an "error" it would be better to err on the side that aligned with the "design and spirit" of the Bible.[32]

Similarly, Scott argued that the anti-abolition Methodists were the ones committing eisegesis. He connected his popular preaching and antislavery populism by once again arraying himself against the established hierarchy of educated professionals and intellectual elites. Defending slavery, he wrote, was the "clear moral vision" of church authorities, bishops, and religious intellectuals. It is important to note that Scott's adversary at this juncture was not simply slaveholders; it was those in the free states who justified slaveholding. "Now, how it looks, to see ministers of the Gospel, putting on their glasses, and poring over the midnight oil," he wrote, "to find, somewhere in the Bible, a passage of Scripture that they think will possibly bear a construction that will favor – not ordinary thieves and robbers – but men-stealers!" Just as Whittemore had read the Bible to construct an argument that the Bible did not contain hell, so too did the anti-abolition Methodists search the Bible for any way they could justify the peculiar institution. Referencing Isiah 61:1's call to proclaim liberty to the captives, Scott argued that the church and ministry had been "perverted" to the point where ministers and bishops had abrogated their plain scriptural duty and looked at the Bible to "see how much they can find that can be *pressed* into the service of slavery!"[33] The verb "*pressed*" is illustrative of Scott's thesis and his exegesis because it suggested that the anti-abolition ministers did not *extract* meaning *out* of the text and instead *forced* their preferred interpretation *into* the text.

Part III of the *Appeal* turned to Cincinnati Conference and largely relitigated many of the issues at stake there, including the Roszel resolutions and allegations of falsehood against Scott. Part IV then discussed a subject which had increasingly dominated much of his recent writing:

[32] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 46-47.
[33] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 47.

conference rights. Part V served as a place for miscellaneous materials that offered further details and context for the arguments in the previous four parts. Scott, however, opened the fourth section with a lamentation that the discussion of conference rights was even necessary, and immediately followed with a quote from Montesquieu. Although the quotation in question did not relate to Montesquieu's most famous contribution to political theory – separation of powers – Scott's familiarity with Montesquieu suggests he was at least aware of it. And in many respects, Scott's views of conference rights were fundamentally a religious version of federalism and separation of powers.[34]

Scott's opening to the section on conference rights is significant to understand how he reconciled conservatism and radicalism. It offers a window into the worldview that made this synthesis possible. This rests on an interpretative framework that I have termed the model society paradigm. As we have seen, Scott frequently turned to the past for answers. However, the *Appeal* illustrates that this was not mere nostalgia because Scott argued that the only way to attain a more just future was by challenging the corrupted present and restoring the principles of the idyllic past. This became the template for all Scottite reform: looking for a place in time and space where principle received its fullest and purest manifestation. For Scott, that time was the English-speaking world of the late 1700s: the time when a true and pure Wesleyan Methodism was on the ascendency, when the Declaration of Independence was written and promulgated, and the abolitionists were moving against slavery in Great Britain.

That is why Scott frequently invoked figures from the past. He believed the answers to present problems did not rest in novel theories or remaking society from the ground up – what Edmund Burke had criticized as innovative change – and he instead championed Burke's

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[34] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 48-77.

approach to reform: fixing problems in the present without discarding the past. His problem was not with Methodism writ large but with a "modern" Methodism that had perverted the "ancient" version established by Wesley. But he did not confine his views of the idyllic past to the religious sphere alone. He incorporated the political into it as well. Scott saw a connection between Christianity and republicanism - his religious identity and his political identity - and believed abolitionism was a manifestation of both. The republicanism of the early years of the United States underscores this and, alongside the Methodism from that time, was part of his model society. "The spirit of liberty was in the country in those days," he wrote while citing a lengthy list of historical authorities that included Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Benjamin Rush.[35]

Scott also applied this view to racial equality. Referencing an officer at Dartmouth College who believed Blacks should be on equal standing with whites, he contrasted that conduct with the case of Prudence Crandall, a schoolteacher who was forced to shut down her school in the 1830s because she had admitted a Black student. "Had Miss Crandall established her school in Canterbury fifty years ago," Scott surmised, "it would not have called forth a legislative act to suppress it." Whether or not Scott romanticized or embellished the narrative of a United States on the cusp of emancipation and racial harmony remains immaterial because he believed it to be true. The model society paradigm rested upon the juxtaposition of "where we stood fifty years ago" and "where we stand *now*." The context is crucial to understanding the larger significance. Scott did not necessarily believe the past was perfect and without faults. Its perfection rested in the convergence of principle and trajectory. The principles of that era were perfect and were increasingly being realized in their time. Scott made this explicit by echoing the familiar view

[35] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 122-125.

that “slavery would not be long continued in our country.”[36] This again underscores the primacy of principle and highlights the ways that policies were the sometimes-imperfect actions of human agency. Shortcomings, then, were not the same as corruption.

This conception of the model society paradigm, however, remains connected with Scott’s understanding of progress and corruption. Progress was not a strict linear line in which things consistently and inevitably got better over time. “Look at the present state of things in our country,” he wrote,” and see whether the spirit of liberty has not indeed progressed backwards.”[37] Scott’s generally favorable view of the past stemmed from his belief that its principles had laid the foundation for future action and social progress. The past, then, could be a source of wisdom and a template to emulate in the present. As seen by Scott’s views of Prudence Crandall, he believed his model society in the past would not have tolerated the proslavery and anti-abolition measures of the 1830s. Similarly, the gag rule did not exist “in the days of Jefferson, Franklin, Rush, Jay, and others of our revolutionary patriots!”[38]

But these measures did not happen in a vacuum. An idyllic society in the past could only succumb to the slow process of corruption. “In a word, look through the whole country;” he said, “examine both Church and State, compare the present with the past, and then say whether the spirit of slavery is not striking its roots deeper and deeper in every part of the land,....” This imagery invokes a gradual process, not an instantaneous transformation. That is why he believed the Founding Fathers would have opposed the gag rule while modern political and religious leaders embraced that measure. He even placed the colonization movement within this

[36] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 122-125.
[37] Scott cited Governor George McDuffie, Nathan Bangs, and a host of southern newspapers and ministers as examples of moral devolution. See Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 124-126.
[38] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 126-127. Scott observed that the gag rule was only possible because of “*Northern votes.*”

framework, blaming the colonizationists for creating the moral corruption that had empowered slavery and racism.[39] Scott's discussion of conference rights in Part IV provides further insight into this process of corruption while demonstrating his conservative tendencies.

Scott opened his discussion of conference rights with a brief analysis of Roman Catholicism that serves as one of his most significant statements on that subject. Scott's writings are replete with criticisms of the "Papists", but his discussion of Catholicism in his *Appeal* offers nuance on the subject. His anti-Catholicism stemmed from what he believed the church had become over time. "The Roman Catholic Church was undoubtedly once as pure, perhaps more republican, than the Methodist Episcopal Church now is," he admitted. In this section, an interesting dichotomy emerged: "The Roman Catholic Church" on one hand – an institution Scott admitted had once been "St. Peter's Church" – and "popery" on the other. This distinction between Catholicism and popery is crucial. The Catholic Church had once adhered to "primitive Gospel simplicity" but gradually yielded to "the anti-Christian claims of popery."[40] The evolution from Roman Catholicism to Papism, then, was a cautionary tale that showed how corruption could transform the model society. He also did not believe Protestants to be inherently superior to Catholics since he feared Protestants could meet a similar fate.

This discussion of the Catholic Church offered Scott an opportunity to explain his understanding of the process of corruption within a model society. Scott's understanding of this process remained fundamentally grounded in a conservatism that resisted changes to established institutions. However, like a Burke, this was not a reflexive or reactionary defense of *all*

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[39] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 107-121, 127. In a response to an address by Wilbur Fisk on colonization, Scott reiterated his earlier views that colonization had retarded antislavery work and crystallized racial animosity. That was where Scott found colonization's corrupting influence to be strongest, what he termed "a system which justifies and strengthens the prejudices of caste" and had been responsible for "the black law of Connecticut." See Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 114.
[40] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 77-78.

institutions; it sought to protect good institutions from the influence of bad principles. After citing Montesquieu and Vattel on the way liberty could be gradually chiseled away, he wrote:

> The natural tendency of power, both in church and state, is to accumulate. The least innovations, therefore, should be *promptly* and *firmly* resisted. Otherwise, these innovations will become *precedents*, and USAGE will make them LAW. It was by slow and almost impercptible advances that popery established itself in the bosom of St. Peter's Church. ... [P]opery, by many steps, with long intervals between them, rose to an eminence, that it never could have reached at one leap.[41]

Scott's conservatism rested on preserving a model society from corruption. His radicalism stemmed from a desire to destroy corruption and restore ancient principles. In both cases, the principles determined worthiness. Adherence to principles preserved a model society and the loss of them led to a descent into corruption. "Good principles should never be sacrificed to the claims of power," he wrote, adding that not even the lure of "good men" should influence it.[42]

While much of Scott's writing in favor of conference rights in the *Appeal* largely echoed his earlier justifications, he increasingly embraced a more republican and classically liberal argument in favor of them. By citing the U.S. Congress and the Massachusetts Legislature in his pamphlet, he implicitly suggested that the Methodist Episcopal Church should adopt a more republican framework. And with his invocation of the "doctrine of human rights" to support conference rights, he argued that no person should have the power to silence dissenting brethren. Moreover, Scott integrated what he had termed the "unprecedented and most fearful crisis" over conference rights within this framework of innovation and corruption. The Springfield Conference of 1837, where Beverley Waugh had refused to allow antislavery action, was not an isolated incident. Waugh's conduct only occurred because others had paved a foundation of

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[41] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 77-78.

[42] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 78. Scott further criticized this tendency to empower organizations just because good people were in charge, "We cannot tell what an administration will be to-morrow by what it is to-day. It is safest and best never to trust men in authority with powers that *can* be abused."

precedent for him. Corruption, then, began with seemingly small matters and extraordinary measures. During the New Hampshire Conference of 1835, for example, Scott recalled that the presiding bishop had declined to authorize an antislavery resolution. Although he allowed the conference to move forward with an antislavery committee, he had nevertheless created "a small innovation" that set the stage for the innovations that would follow until they arrived at the point where a bishop like Waugh could unilaterally smother the will of entire conferences.[43]

Scott's discussion of conference rights also introduced another important component to his worldview: the role of conscience. Conscience was indispensable to his conception of the principle-policy paradigm and his belief in the model society. It should be understood as a conduit that translated principle into policy. This made unity among differing individuals a possibility because principled people could have different policy prescriptions while still sharing an underlying union of principle. But conscience was also as much a personal "duty" for people to obey as it was an individual "right" that organizations were obligated to respect.[44]

An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church proved to be such a significant work because it offers a snapshot into Orange Scott's abolitionism and his Methodism in 1838. By largely reviewing and republishing earlier works, it echoed the same views he had championed since 1835. Yet even his new content marked a continuation and expansion rather than a departure. His approach to exegesis and his opposition to perceived eisegesis remained constant while his antislavery views matured as he refined the foundations that he had built from 1835-1838. Moreover, this pamphlet helped crystallize his conservative inclinations and radical impulses through the principle-policy paradigm and the framework of the model society. By

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[43] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 82-87.
[44] Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 95-96. Methodists were "bound in conscience to do all good they can." If an annual conference "solemnly believes that it can exert an influence against a great moral evil in a conference capacity," then Scott suggested they were "conscientiously bound" to do so.

August 1838, Scott's *Appeal* had continued to grow in popularity with Oliver Johnson, editor *pro tem* of the *Liberator*, writing a favorable review. "Brother Scott has done the cause of humanity an invaluable service by his timely 'Appeal,'" the review noted, adding that "A copy of it should be placed in every anti-slavery library."[45] This work would continue to sell through 1839.[46]

By the spring of 1838, however, Scott shifted his attention to the upcoming Utica convention in May. As a member of the committee in charge of coordinating the trip to New York, Scott sent an announcement to the *Zion's Herald* on logistics and expenses. He outlined an itinerary to help provide delegates with possible options for getting from the New England states to Utica. These various paths combined steamboat, train, and stagecoach, with Scott suggesting delegates leave Boston on either April 27 or April 28. These routes involved going from Boston to New York City by steamboat and railroad or taking a stagecoach from Boston and going through Springfield. With the trip taking place over the weekend, Scott carefully outlined possible accommodations for Sunday, and personally endorsed his old community in Springfield by assuring readers that the community would "welcome the delegates to their houses."[47]

Scott hoped delegates would arrive in Albany, New York no later than April 30 so they could make the train to Utica in time for the convention's informal opening on May 1. He estimated that the trip would cost between $13 and $15 depending on method of travel. "Don't mind this, brethren, in a good cause," he told delegates, and called on readers of the *Herald* to

[45] "An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church.," *Liberator*, August 31, 1838, vol. 8, no. 35, p. 139, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 23, 2022).
[46] "Appeal to the M.E. Church.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 26, 1839, vol. 4, no. 43, p. 2 and "Appeal to the M.E. Church.," *Zion's Watchman*, Nov. 9, 1839, vol. 4, no. 45, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). The *Appeal* continued to be printed, given La Roy Sunderland's wording: "We have now on hand a large quantity...." Desiring "immediate circulation," he offered to sell it at $25 per 100 and $5 per dozen, although he reported two weeks later that this was "erroneously advertised" and that the price was $20 per 100 and $3 per dozen.
[47] O. Scott, "The Convention.," *Zion's Herald*, April 18, 1838, vol. 9, no. 16, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

raise money to support those traveling to Utica for the convention.[48] Scott also made two announcements about the convention itself. First, he declared that anyone who accepted the premises of abolition Methodism – "the great principle of the sin of slavery and the duty of immediate emancipation" – would be admitted regardless of whether they were an elected delegate. Second, he told readers that he planned to bring copies of his *Appeal* with him and asked readers to send in their orders. After describing the product, he ended with one last pitch: "A copy should be in every Methodist family, whether they are abolitionists or not."[49]

On April 23, just days before departing for Utica, Scott delivered the keynote address for the Boston Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society. David H. Ela, the Boston-based publisher, recalled that Scott's speech was "highly interesting." The society drafted resolutions in the week and forwarded them to the Utica Convention. Scott, however, had long supported greater action by all members of the church – ministers and laity – and his presence at a convention composed in part of Methodist members served as a tangible example of his commitment to that belief.[50] In the same way conference rights had become a focal point of his agitation, Scott increasingly turned to ordinary Methodists as an important ally in his crusade against moral corruption and episcopal overreach.

The Utica Convention, however, represented a crucial juncture for Orange Scott and the abolition Methodists. Twelve of annual conferences sent a combined total of two hundred delegates, with members of four additional conferences writing letters of support. With twenty-

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[48] The Convention was scheduled to begin on May 2, but delegates held a "preparatory meeting" at 3pm on May 1 and the convention hosted an antislavery lecture that the evening. In a postscript, Scott also told readers that he had visited the stage office in Boston and determined that it would be two or three dollars cheaper to travel from Boston to Worcester by railroad and then on to Springfield by coach. "By all means take this route, unless you have business the other way," he advised. He also calculated that there was no price difference between going from Boston to Albany or Lowell to Albany.

[49] Scott, "The Convention.," 2.

[50] D.H. Ela, "Boston Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society.," *Zion's Herald*, June 6, 1838, vol. 9, no. 23, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). This organization was an "auxiliary" to the conference society.

eight conferences across the entire United States, that meant that more than half the Methodist Episcopal Church was represented in some capacity at Utica. Given that abolition Methodism had begun as a regionally landlocked movement in 1835, these developments indicated significant growth in the span of a few years.[51]

Scott inaugurated the unofficial opening of the convention by delivering an evening lecture on May 1. Ela, one of the lay delegates, noted that Scott addressed "a full house" and had discussed the connection between the Methodist Episcopal Church and slavery. Although not a firsthand witness, he spoke with people who had attended the lecture. According to their reviews, Ela concluded that Scott's speech was "able and well received."[52] The editor of the *Friend of Man* concurred and, after speaking with those present, noted, "we understand it was an able and workman-like effort, worthy of the well-earned reputation of the speaker."[53]

The next morning, the convention formally began with Timothy Merritt calling the meeting to order.[54] The first order of business at the convention was to create a committee to select convention officers, including a president, vice presidents, and secretaries. Orange Scott was chosen to serve on this committee and its first act was to nominate Merritt to serve as convention president. According to Ela, Merritt, declined the position "on account of his infirm health."[55] Ultimately, Scott's committee chose Jared Perkins of New Hampshire as president.

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[51] "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, May 12, 1838, vol. 3, no. 19, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). The delegates represented the three New England conferences, New York, Troy, Oneida, Black River, Genesee, Erie, Philadelphia, Michigan, and Baltimore. Abolitionists in the New Jersey, Pittsburg, Ohio, and Illinois conferences also sent communications.

[52] D.H. Ela, "Utica Convention.," *Zion's Herald*, May 9, 1838, vol. 9, no. 19, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022).

[53] "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Colored American*, June 2, 1838, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[54] It is unclear whether the convention began at 8am or 9am, as David H. Ela claimed the convention began at 8am with La Roy Sunderland said it started at 9am. For the full proceedings of the convention, see D.H. Ela, "Utica Convention.," *Zion's Herald*, May 9, 1838, vol. 9, no. 19, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022) and "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, May 12, 1838, vol. 3, no. 19, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[55] Ela, "Utica Convention.," 3.

The geographic composition of the vice presidents, however, is especially noteworthy. Five of the vice presidents came from New York, another five came from New England, and the remaining two represented Methodists in Pennsylvania and Michigan. The list of officers included several of Scott's friends and allies, including Seth Sprague, an acquittance of his since his time in Charlestown; John Parker, his co-laborer in Lowell during the 1836-1837 conference year; and Wilbur Hoag, his friend from New York.[56]

The nominees further signified the geographic emergence of New York as a hotbed of abolition Methodism. Two selections stood out – Luther Lee and Schuyler Hoes – both from Fulton, New York, and ministers of the Black River Conference. These men would increasingly play a significant role in the history of abolition Methodism. Lee, most importantly, was an especially pugnacious preacher who had most recently made a name for himself by writing articles critical of Wilbur Fisk that, in some respects, served as a spiritual continuation of Scott's own debate with Middletown Methodism. The Utica Convention also exposed Lee to a wider audience. The *Friend of Man* was especially impressed with him and promised readers "we will try and introduce" the man they termed "this new standard bearer in our ranks."[57] Lee's emergence was important because his polemical style in promoting abolition Methodism made him a natural ally of Scott's in the debates that took place over the following years.

The morning session on May 2 then turned to the formation of six major committees that Scott suggested: a committee on convention business, a committee to draft an address to the Methodist Episcopal Church, a committee of correspondence to handle letters to the convention

[56] "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2.

[57] "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Colored American*, June 2, 1838, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). For a sample of Lee's writings against Fisk, see L. Lee, "Reply to Pres. Fisk.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 2, 1838, vol. 3, no. 22, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

and report resolutions, a committee to draft a declaration of sentiments, and a finance committee focused on supporting the *Zion's Watchman*; the sixth committee, concerned with addressing the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in Britain, was later formed in the afternoon on the recommendation of the Business Committee. Of these six major committees, Scott served on the committee of correspondence and the committee on a declaration of sentiments.[58]

The afternoon session, which began at 2:30 pm, focused on the discussion and adoption of several resolutions. These resolutions largely echoed much that had already been said in the debates between the abolition and anti-abolition Methodists: it endorsed free discussion of slavery, called on the church to act against slavery, and claimed that antislavery agitation was not "revolutionary."[59] Among the resolutions passed, one stood out to Ela: a resolution against "prejudice of color." This resolution, proposed by an unnamed African American delegate, was followed by remarks by another unnamed Black delegate who spoke to the convention about his own experiences with slavery and how his wife had been a Methodist minister's slave for ten years. Worse, her three children had been sold by that preacher. "The narrative excited a deep feeling in the audience," Ela recalled, adding that the resolution passed and was followed by a second resolution that called on presenting "a statement of grievances" to the bishops that would "solicit their assistance to redress the wrongs he has suffered." That evening, the convention hosted New York abolitionist and Utica-resident Alvan Stewart to deliver a speech on "Christian obligation on the political aspects of slavery" that Ela described as "very able and interesting."[60]

[58] Ela, "Utica Convention.," 3. Scott served alongside Merritt, Lee, Samuel Kelley, Wilber Hoag, and Schuyler Hoes on the committee to draft a declaration of sentiments.
[59] Ela, "Utica Convention.," 3. "The Convention.," 2.
[60] Ela, "Utica Convention.," 3. According to Ela, Stewart argued that every Christian had an obligation to exercise their "political privileges" and he "enumerated no less than seven distinct modes, in which we may constitutionally and legally operate on slavery in the States."

The second day of the convention, May 3, began with prayer and singing by Charles K. True and commenced with the report by Scott's committee on a declaration of sentiments. The declaration did not say much that was particularly new but reiterated the continued influence of Scottite abolitionism. It maintained Scott's longstanding definition of abolition: "holding the human species as property is a most flagrant sin" and "Immediate emancipation without expatriation."[61] This definition was broad enough to include opponents of slavery from different policy preferences with the only exception of colonizationists. The declaration, then, underscores Scott's continued hope of constructing a broad coalition of abolitionists united by shared principles. The declaration made this explicit at the end, calling for abolitionists to "harmonize our views, concentrate our strength, and unite in our work" on accomplishing the "grand object – the peaceful abolition of slavery in this land." This perspective left room for disagreement and discussion, urging abolitionists of shared principle "to deliberate on the best possible way of affording them [slaves] relief."[62] To Scott, all abolitionists agreed with the central object and shared a unity of principle; they sometimes disagreed on the policy proscriptions that could best realize that shared vision. Abolitionists, then, could disagree and still cooperate because their differences were simply about the best way to accomplish the same goal.

The declaration was well-received, and the committee closed the morning session by ordering it to be printed as a pamphlet. That afternoon and evening, the convention formed a committee of twenty-four delegates from across the conferences spearheaded by Scott, Perkins, Lee, Hoag, Hoes, and Storrs. Except for A.H. Melville, being Philadelphia's lone member of the committee, every annual conference had at least two delegates.[63] The convention remained

[61] The declaration repeated statements Scott and other abolition Methodists had made, including the line from his Appeal, "that which is morally wrong, can never be politically right."
[62] "The Convention.," 2.
[63] William M. Sullivan and Amasa Gillet represented the Michigan Conference.

keenly aware of the larger transnational context of its antislavery agitation, selecting Luther Lee to represent the abolition Methodists at the Wesleyan Conference in Canada and electing Scott to attend the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in England. Delegates then concluded business by passing a series of resolutions against slavery and racism, reading letters to the convention from supporters and forwarding them to the *Zion's Watchman* for publication, forming a committee to assign antislavery agents to the western states, and authorizing the publication of the convention proceedings in the *Watchman*.[64]

The Utica Convention left a lasting impact on American Methodism even if it brought little change to the Methodist Episcopal Church's positions on slavery and abolition in the short term. Its legacy can be quantified in three interconnected ways. First, the convention marked the first time that abolition Methodists cooperated in a way that transcended conference and geographical boundaries. The New Hampshire and New England Methodists had presented a largely united front against slavery since 1835, but, by 1838, that network of abolition Methodists ran from Maine to Michigan. Second, the Utica Convention became a symbol that foreshadowed the eventual fragmentation of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[65] This theme would become a backdrop for the eventual schism between Wesleyan and Episcopal Methodists. It stoked fears of schism as abolition Methodists gathered in a separate religious organization,

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[64] "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2. Ela, "Utica Convention.," *Zion's Herald*, 3. For a list of some of the 150 letters that the committee of correspondence reviewed, see *Zion's Watchman*, May 19, 1838, vol. 3, no. 20, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022), "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, May 26, 1838, vol. 3, no. 21, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022), and ""The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 9, 1838, vol. 3, no. 23, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[65] "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention at Utica.," *Advocate of Freedom*, May 24, 1838, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Colored American*, June 2, 1838, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). The *Advocate of Freedom* singled out the decision to nominate Orange Scott as delegate to England and Luther Lee as delegate to Canada. According to this newspaper, Scott touted the growth of abolition Methodism from "scarce twenty-five" to "two thousand ministers, and from FORTY TO FIFTY thousand members." The *Colored American*, republishing an article from the *Friend of Man*, noted that Scott had emphasized that abolition Methodism was "neither schismatical nor revolutionary, but solely [about] the abolition of slavery."

and it laid the foundation for an independent and conscious antislavery minority within an anti-abolition church. Keenly aware of this reality, one New York anti-abolitionist cited the presence of Orange Scott and George Storrs as proof that the convention was of "schismatical character."[66] Third, and most immediate, it represented an open defiance of the warnings from Wilbur Fisk and the bishops that abolition Methodists should immediately cease their agitation. As we will soon see, the Utica Convention amounted to a test of the resolve of anti-abolition Methodists. Responses to that test, however, ultimately varied by annual conference and what anti-abolition Methodists could realistically attain. More anti-abolition conferences embraced a repressive policy while antislavery conferences adopted what came to be known as pacification.

Two days after the Utica Convention, Scott was in New York for the fifth annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, representing Lowell alongside A.D. Merrill. Scott did not participate much in the proceedings of the society but opened the afternoon session on May 5 with prayer and was appointed to serve as a manager of the society. He delivered a speech to update the society on the Utica Convention and the state of abolitionism in the Methodist Episcopal Church, borrowing much of this content from his address in Utica. John G. Whittier was impressed with the speech and remarked that he and the others in attendance "listened to [him] with much satisfaction."[67] The *Vermont Telegraph* offered a similarly favorable review, describing Scott's May 5 address as "a most powerful speech."[68] On May 7, he voted for a pair of resolutions put forward by Oliver Johnson, a delegate from the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery

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[66] "Proceedings in the N.Y. Conf.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 9, 1838, vol. 3, no. 23, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[67] John G. Whittier, "Letter from the Editor.," *Colored American*, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott repeated the line from the Utica Convention touting the exponential growth of abolition Methodism since 1835.
[68] "Rapid Growth of Abolitionism among the Methodists.," *Liberator*, June 22, 1838, vol. 8, no. 25, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

Society, that enjoyed unanimous support. Johnson's resolutions echoed Scott's view of antislavery unity. Johnson observed that "men who differ widely from each other on political and theological subjects can labor harmoniously together for its promotion" and praised "the efforts of our brethren of any religious denomination in which slavery exists, to purify their own church from the sin of slavery...."[69] Scott's ideas about the goals of the antislavery movement, then, were seemingly aligned with many of his allies. That unity, however, only foreshadowed the coming fragmentation of the movement. Within the span of a few months, Johnson and Scott would soon turn from allies into adversaries.

Scott did not return to Lowell immediately after the conclusion of the annual meeting. If the Utica Convention had been a test of the resolve of anti-abolition Methodists, then their reply came only weeks later during the New York annual conference. Their response was swift and severe. New York anti-abolitionists brought charges against several abolition Methodists in the conference who supported the Utica Convention – P.B. Brown, Charles K. True, and James Floy – on charges of "contumacy and insubordination." Their trials, orchestrated by Elijah Hedding and Nathan Bangs, were overseen by a committee composed primarily of anti-abolitionists. Bangs emerged as the unofficial prosecutor by supplying anti-abolition resolutions and taking aim at the Utica Convention's resolution against racism. "Here is AMALGAMATION!" he told

[69] "Fifth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, with the Minutes of the Meetings of the Society for Business and the Speeches Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting on the 8th of May, 1838.," New York: William S. Dorr, 1838, Sabin Americana, p. 4, 11-12, 15. Johnson's resolution praising ministers, however, came with an important qualifier: he added that "we should deprecate the formation of any Anti-Slavery Society, which imposes a religious or political test for the purpose of rendering the Anti-Slavery cause subservient to the interests of a sect or party, or of opposing existing organizations." In a letter to the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, John G. Whittier offered insight into the underlying disagreement over politics, noting that abolitionists were divided on the question of whether the federal government could abolish slavery in the states. See John G. Whittier, "Letter from the Editor.," *Colored American*, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

the conference, adding that the abolition Methodists wished to "give your daughters to young men of color, and your sons to young women of color."[70]

When True requested that Luther Lee be allowed to act as his counsel, the conference denied him. Floy, by contrast, spoke in his own defense and argued that neither Orange Scott nor George Storrs was his "leader" because "I was born a freeman."[71] Ultimately, the conference rendered an anti-abolition judgment. Floy was stripped of his deaconship, while True and Plumb were suspended. This approach, however, did not have the intended effect of demoralizing abolitionists. In the aftermath of the punishments, a defiant Sunderland boasted that "these proceedings have advanced the abolition cause in this city."[72] The conference also adopted a new rule that prohibited members or potential ministers from patronizing the *Zion's Watchman* under penalty of censure.[73] The New York Conference represented the ways anti-abolitionists, when faced with a growing abolition movement, sought to preserve their influence by tightening their grip on the official mechanisms of church government. These measures, however, did not quell abolitionism; they only alienated abolition Methodists from Methodist Episcopal polity.

Scott had stayed in New York to press charges of misrepresentation, unchristian conduct misrepresentations, and personal attacks against Bangs during the annual conference. These allegations, however, did not receive widespread support. Even a reporter for the *Zion's Watchman* strongly criticized Scott for making them. Hedding, bound by the tradition that

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[70] "Proceedings in the N.Y. Conf.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 9, 1838, vol. 3, no. 23, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Lucius Matlack, in his history of slavery and Methodism, recounted many of the cases of ecclesiastical retaliation against abolitionists, including True, Floy, and Brown. See Lucius C. Matlack, *The History of American Slavery and Methodism, From 1780 to 1849: And History of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America; In Two Parts, With an Appendix.*, Part 1, Gale, Sabin Americana (New York: No. 5 Spruce Street, 1849), 239-296.
[71] James Floy, quoted in "Proceedings in the N.Y. Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2.
[72] "Proceedings in the N.Y. Conf.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2.
[73] G. Storrs, "The Mandate of the N.Y. Conf.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 23, 1838, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

ministers from other conferences were permitted to speak freely, allowed Scott to address the conference and make his case against Bangs. However, Scott's speech proved to be short-lived as Hedding almost immediately declared him to be out of order and the proceedings quickly devolved into a parliamentary tug-of-war between Scott and the anti-abolitionists. The conference ultimately exonerated Bangs and authorized a favorable report of him with an overwhelming vote of 151 to 9.[74]

While staying in New York, Scott also drew the ire of the Philadelphia Conference, which passed a resolution that condemned him and George Storrs for crossing into their conference boundaries and promoting antislavery societies. In reply, Scott and Storrs co-wrote a rejoinder that La Roy Sunderland published in the *Zion's Watchman*, mocking the conference for taking "offence" at the mere act of crossing "their 'parish' lines." The two ministers concluded that they answered to their annual conferences, not the authorities of another conference.[75] Scott then returned to Massachusetts to attend the New-England Anti-Slavery convention at Marlboro Chapel in Boston from May 30 through June 2. Some early cracks in the movement over political action began to appear, but Scott did not participate in those discussions. His only speech came in support of a rather innocuous resolution promoted by Samuel Osgood, a preacher from Springfield, that called for immediate emancipation and linked the cause of abolition with the cause of God.[76] When confronted with dissension in the movement, then, Scott's first impulse was to emphasize first principles.

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[74] "Case of N. Bangs.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 16, 1838, vol. 3, no. 24, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[75] O. Scott and G. Storrs, "Philadelphia Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 2, 1838, vol. 3, no. 22, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[76] "New England A.S. Convention.," *Liberator*, June 8, 1838, vol. 8, no. 23, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Osgood's resolution, supported by Henry B. Stanton and Scott, passed with no debate. Other abolitionists started to grapple with political action and women's rights and battle lines began to be drawn. The issue of women's rights, more than Alvan Stewart's resolution on political action, produced

On June 6, only days later, Scott attended the New England annual conference in Boston. The conference marked a convergence of many significant figures from outside New England, most notably on the anti-abolition side. While Sunderland and Charles True attended from New York, Elijah Hedding and Joshua Soule served as presiding bishops while anti-abolition leaders Nathan Bangs and Henry B. Bascom also attended. Sunderland, who reported his observations to the *Zion's Watchman*, enjoyed reuniting with ministers he had not seen for some time and highlighted Wilbur Fisk as one of the speakers who delivered "Able and interesting addresses,...." His description of the first five days of the conference, however, indicated the cloud that hung over it. The campaign against abolition Methodists in the New York Conference had not been an isolated case. Hedding, Sunderland observed on June 14, spent a considerable amount of time during the conference pressing charges against "a number of brethren...." Days later, the Troy Conference simultaneously adopted a similar posture against abolition Methodists.[77] Sunderland found Hedding's conduct to be a distraction from their religious duties, complaining that the allegations "will probably detain the conference till the close of the week."[78] But across the northern annual conferences, anti-abolition Methodists embraced a more aggressive and repressive policy against abolitionism. Even New England was not safe from it.

Fisk first brought charges against Scott and Sunderland on the same basis that the New York Conference had condemned True, Floy, and Brown. If Scott's demotion from presiding elder in 1836 had been tangentially related to his abolitionism, then the current attitude of the church authorities made no such pretense. Anti-abolitionists wielded their ecclesiastical and

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"considerable debate" during the June 3 afternoon session. Charles Torrey, Alanson St. Clair, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Stanton, Amos Phelps, and Henry C. Wright all clashed over that subject.

[77] G. Beckley, "Troy Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 30, 1838, vol. 3, no. 26, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). The Troy Conference investigated ministers like Cyrus Prindle for allegedly writing *Zion's Watchman* articles and endorsing the Utica Convention.

[78] "The New England Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 23, 1838, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

disciplinary authority to curtail abolitionism and enforce silence on the subject. However, Hedding, Soule, Bangs, and Fisk did not enjoy the same success the anti-abolitionists had experienced in New York because there were considerably more abolitionists in New England. The annual conference refused to convict either Scott or Sunderland after a lengthy period of trials and testimonies. These charges of misconduct were significant because they illustrated that anti-abolition Methodists saw Scott and Sunderland as the leaders of the abolition Methodists in the conference.

Hedding did not take failure well. "The Bishop [Hedding] was excited exceedingly, more so than I ever saw him," Scott later recalled, adding that he delivered "a very able, powerful, and inflammatory address" that lasted two hours. Hedding's speech championed the Winslow-Snow conception of republican liberty and argued that Scott's antislavery speech was an act of violence.[79] News of the conference's actions quickly spread to the larger antislavery world, and the *Liberator* rushed to bring attention to the story and condemn the anti-abolitionists. Fisk, not Scott or Sunderland, should have been the one charged with slander. Most notably, however, the *Liberator* connected the "despotic designs" of the bishops at the New England Conference with the "popish proceedings of the late N.Y. Methodist Conference."[80] Both sought the same end.

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[79] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 40-41. Scott offered a brief sketch of Hedding's speech in his autobiography. One of Hedding's points against Scott rested on the charge that Scott had told a slaveholder that he had "eat[en] up God's people." Scott recalled that Hedding had suggested "If that slave-holder was to meet him (Mr. Scott) at the South, he would probably pistol and dirk him, and if he should, I don't know which would be the greater sinner, he that called his fellow-man a 'cannibal,' or him who resented it."

[80] "The New England Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 23, 1838, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "Methodist Conference.," *Liberator*, June 22, 1838, vol. 8, no. 25, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "Methodist Conference." And "Very True.," *Liberator*, June 22, 1838, vol. 8, no. 25, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Sunderland likened Methodism to the Catholic Church, comparing quotes from the New York Conference to Catholic figures like Pope Gregory XVI. See "'Look at This.,'" *Zion's Watchman*, July 7, 1838, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery (accessed April 12, 2022).

By June 14, over a week after the conference began, little work had been accomplished. The *Zion's Herald*, which recorded some of the doings of the conference, did not offer a specific reason, although the unsuccessful anti-abolition tribunal outlined in Sunderland's account serves as a likely source of this delay. Amid these boiling tensions between abolitionists and anti-abolitionists, Gershom F. Cox, a visiting minister from the Maine Conference, proposed a compromise. The conference soon formed a committee on "pacification" composed of six abolitionists and six anti-abolitionists that outlined what would come to be known as the "Pacification Plan." Its overall objective was to "reconcile" the two rival factions by establishing a compromise in which the conference accepted abolition principles while formally banning Methodist antislavery organizations.[81]

This committee, designed to find what Cox called "Common Ground," struggled to even find harmony within its own ranks. Ultimately, internal dissension forced the committee to add four new members in search of a position that most of the conference could support. It took several days for the committee to even develop a report. Cox, however, suggested bringing the proposition before the entire convention and taking a non-binding vote on potential measures. After Cox read a draft proposal of his plan and Soule delivered what even Scott admitted was "a very impressive speech" in support of it, the proposal carried with 58 votes in favor, 21 against,

[81] For an account of the daily proceedings of the conference, see "Session of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 13, 1838, vol. 9, no. 24, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 16, 2022), "Session of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 20, 1838, vol. 9, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 16, 2022), and "Close of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 27, 1838, vol. 9, no. 26, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 16, 2022). This account, however, only offers a general sketch. For example, the trials of abolitionists are completely unmentioned. La Roy Sunderland published the transcript of his own trial in the *Zion's Watchman*, which took up nearly nine columns in the paper. See "Trial of the Editor.," August 11, 1838, vol. 3, no. 32, p.2-3 and "Trial of the Editor," *Zion's Watchman*, August 18, 1838, vol. 3, no. 33, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Orange Scott was called to testify at Sunderland's trial.

and 40 abstentions.[82] Although the compromise prevailed, only a plurality favored it. This lack of majority support, coupled with the fact that the committee could not even find common ground among its own ranks, forced another vote that Soule scheduled for the final day of the conference. Delegates were instructed to make an up-or-down vote without the possibility of amendments, and that final vote rejected the plan by a relatively narrow margin of 54 in favor and 64 against it. Although a seemingly close vote, James Porter, who attended the conference, attributed this to the fact that few outside the committee knew the particulars of the plan since it had only been read twice. Moreover, Porter complained that anti-abolitionists had coarsened the debate by framing any opposition to it as being "opposed to peace, and even to God."[83] With that vote taken on what came to be known as the "Pacification Plan," the New England Conference ended the longest annual conference in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church on June 22. But the Boston Conference was not only noteworthy because of its length. It embodied a trend of increasingly divisive and polarizing annual conferences between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists. Sunderland tartly summarized its character with the phrase, 'War to the knife, and the knife to the hilt."[84]

The Pacification Plan became the next major pillar in the debate between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists. Like most compromises, it left few people satisfied except for those

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[82] O. Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 7, 1838, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022)

[83] J. Porter, "Strictures on 'Common Ground.,'" *Zion's Herald*, August 29, 1838, vol. 9, no. 35, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (November 16, 2022).

[84] "Close of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 27, 1838, vol. 9, no. 26, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 16, 2022). The previous record holder was the 1838 New York annual conference, the other conference that year in which abolition trials dominated. La Roy Sunderland explicitly complained about this, noting that "about half the whole time...was taken up in hearing and acting on charges and complaints made by the presiding bishop..." See "The New England Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, vol. 3, no. 26, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). During this same conference, however, Hedding and Soule refused to accept antislavery petitions from Orange Scott on the basis that they had run out of time. See O. Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 7, 1838, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

who prioritized harmony above all else. It declared slavery to be an evil yet simultaneously championed the Fisk-Hedding perspective that not all slaveholders had committed a sin. It then advocated nine measures to secure peace between abolitionists and anti-abolitionists, including prohibitions on criticizing ministers, lecturing on slavery, establishing antislavery religious papers, and forming Methodist antislavery organizations. In exchange for these concessions, abolitionists would be allowed to join secular antislavery organizations, offer antislavery petitions to the general conference, preach on slavery, and pray for slaves.[85] Abolition Methodists were divided. Scott, who had championed the slogan "first pure, then peaceable," naturally became a vocal opponent. Radicals such as David H. Ela, Joseph A. Merrill, Ephraim Scott, Isaac Bonney, John Parker, and Frederick P. Tracy shared Orange Scott's objections while other abolitionists like Bryan Morse took a more moderate position. Other abolitionists, such as Charles True, Timothy Merritt, and Phineas Crandall supported the plan.[86]

On June 25, Scott wrote an open address to abolition Methodists in the United States about the proposed plan. He saw it as evidence that abolitionism was winning; it had "been opposed, persecuted, and slandered" and yet it only "multiplied." The proposal for compromise on slavery, then, was an effort to forestall abolition Methodists from winning the victory they were on the cusp of attaining. He worried, however, that the proposal gave abolition Methodists

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[85] "Measures of Pacification.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 30, 1838, vol. 3, no. 26, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive. O. Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 7, 1838, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022)

[86] D.H. Ela, "The Pacification.," *Zion's Herald*, July 18, 1838, vol. 9, no. 29, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Bryan Morse, "The Two Extremes.," *Zion's Herald*, July 25, 1838, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Ela vocally opposed the proposition, saying that it "binds you [ministers] to silence in the church" and relegated moral reform to "the tender mercies of political bargaining." Morse, by contrast, did not necessarily endorse the plan but worried that the church was coming apart as "both sides" increasingly resorted to "impugn[ing] the motive of each other." A list of those who voted for and against the plan can be found in Scott's address. O. Scott, "Address.," 2-3. Phineas Crandall also wrote a letter to explain his vote, arguing that he was not satisfied with Cox's proposal but nevertheless chose to "make some sacrifice for the sake peace,...." See "More About the Pacification Bill.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 21, 1838, vol. 3, no. 9, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

just enough of what they wanted that they would acquiesce and divide the movement. "And here, I fear, is the rock on which we shall split," he wrote forebodingly, "The sound of peace is always pleasant, but it may be purchased at true great a price." For Scott, one could not sacrifice principles for peace, and he likened their situation to Daniel compromising with the Babylonians.[87]

Scott opposed the Pacification Plan because, although well-intentioned, it had been built on an untenable foundation. He criticized the preamble for placing church unity ahead of the good of enslaved Americans. However, prioritizing unity above all else was merely "objectionable" when compared with the plan's "much more objectionable" statement of principles. The proposal, he complained, gave abolitionists something they wanted – identifying slavery as sinful – before qualifying it out of existence. It may have admitted that slavery was wrong but followed the statement by immediately carving out exceptions. Given Scott's views on absolute morality, he believed that the "exception" portion meant a principled abolitionist could not support the plan. The act of creating exceptions to something that was sinful in all cases, he wrote, "nullifies and destroys, in a great measure, what precedes it [the passage condemning slavery as evil]." Moreover, Scott took issue with the fact that the anti-abolitionists on the committee could not even assent to supporting an immediate move towards emancipation. A genuine compromise, according to Scott, should have been a statement which admitted that slavery was evil and that actions should be taken to move towards its abolition. This underscores the same principle-policy paradigm that Scott articulated in his *Appeal*: that individuals could compromise on the best measures to advance shared principle. The principle was, as Scott had

[87] O. Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 7, 1838, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott began on a somewhat self-congratulatory note by claiming that he "stood nearly alone" at first, had "been through the *whole campaign*," and "stood in the hottest of the battle." When lamenting the cost of peace, he once again invoked his favorite line, "first pure, then peaceable."

written in 1835, that slavery was a sin that it should be immediately abandoned; he had left the particulars of how to get there up to the discretion of individual conscience. In the case of the Pacification Plan, principle and policy created the impasse. Scott did not demand anti-abolitionists "subscribe to the doctrine of immediate emancipation" but likewise declared that abolitionists could not sign a document that did not at least "*look* toward emancipation!"[88]

Scott was equally critical of the plan's actual measures, which he likened to a preemptive surrender. Most importantly, he rejected the plan because he believed it granted abolitionists things they were entitled to by right. "We get nothing, but indirectly, at least, concede much in principles," he lamented.[89] His address also included an alternative plan that removed the parts he considered to be objectionable and replaced them with material abolitionists had proposed during the conference. In his view, this abolitionist version of the Pacification Plan was still flawed but he considered it to be a far superior version that would not have required abolitionists to "give our principles ... on either the sin of slavery or emancipation."[90]

For Scott, however, the effort to unite abolition and anti-abolition Methodists was doomed to failure because the dispute between them was no longer a matter of policy. "My opinion is," he wrote, "that no union can be effected between abolitionists and anti-abolitionists, while their opinions remain unchanged." Their divisions stemmed from the fact that they could not even agree on the underlying principles at stake. Since they could not find common ground on the question of whether slaves were human beings entitled to freedom, the two factions could not act in concert. Abolition and anti-abolition policies, then, differed because those rival policies were derived from irreconcilable principles. In the same way the Methodist Episcopal

[88] Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2-3.
[89] As Scott put it, these were rights that "we have always had."
[90] Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2-3.

Church sought a compromise after the Cincinnati Conference in 1836 that preserved the anti-abolition consensus, the church again promoted peace on anti-abolition terms in 1838. Instead of acquiescing to those conditions in the name of harmony, Scott called for defiance. But this threatened not only to split abolition and anti-abolition Methodists; abolitionists themselves were divided. And when faced with the prospect of a division within abolition Methodism, Scott could only remark, "God forbid."[91]

That summer, a young abolition Methodist minister from Philadelphia, Lucius C. Matlack, wrote to Sunderland to express his discontent with the news of the Pacification Plan. Even though the conference had ultimately defeated it, he admitted that he was still "grieved" by the fact that some abolition Methodists had even considered the measure and been "disposed to compromise the great principles of right...." Nevertheless, Matlack found himself "constrained to rejoice that there are yet good men and true" inside the New England Conference.[92] Matlack would be a figure who would increasingly play a vital role in both the story of abolition Methodism and the story of Orange Scott.

These concerns about the Pacification Plan and the ways it could divide abolition Methodists were almost immediately vindicated. Cox returned to Maine for its annual conference and, with Elijah Hedding presiding over the gathering, proposed they adopt the plan. It passed by an overwhelming margin of 64-3. The annual conference also rejected passing antislavery memorials to the upcoming general conference by a closer vote of 24-30.[93] With the New England Conference divided on Cox's proposal and Maine in support of pacification, the only

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[91] Scott, "Address.," *Zion's Watchman*, 2-3. Scott called on Methodists to form antislavery societies "in every circuit ... where half a dozen abolitionists can be found" and cooperate with the American Anti-Slavery Society.

[92] Lucius C. Matlack, *Zion's Watchman*, August 11, 1838, vol. 3, no. 32, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[93] Pacificator, "The Maine Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 21, 1838, vol. 3, no. 29, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

remaining conference in New England was the New Hampshire Conference. This conference met in Danville in July. In a reversal of fortune for proponents of common ground, New Hampshire abolition Methodists – including four presiding elders – unanimously passed a series of resolutions at their conference antislavery society opposing the Pacification Plan. George Storrs played a crucial role in stymying the Cox plan by wielding rhetoric like Scott. "Let us, brethren, stick by old abolitionism, which has been *nicknamed* MODERN ABOLITIONISM," he declared, adding that "it is the old wine, after all; and let us take care not to get it 'mingled with water;' – and especially with *stagnant water*."[94]

Storr's position caught the attention of New England abolitionists. Jotham Horton, for example, praised the New Hampshire Conference for "standing erect and speaking out officially their honest convictions on slavery." Like Scott, Horton viewed the proposal on pacification as a distraction meant to divide abolitionists and prevent them from presenting a united front against slavery. Emboldened by the news, he instead reaffirmed his belief that "there is no other but a straight forward course for us to pursue."[95] Only through formal and informal church action could abolition Methodists hoped to secure their twin goals of emancipation and equalization. New Hampshire, however, was not alone in its anti-conciliatory stance. The Black River Conference also resisted pacification, with Luther Lee reporting to the *Watchman* that "We had no peace measures to contend about" and touting that no ministers were charged for attending

[94] G.S., "New Hampshire Conference True to Her Principles.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 21, 1838, vol. 3, no. 29, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022)., Geo. Storrs, "PEACE! PEACE!!"," *Zion's Watchman*, July 21, 1838, vol. 3, no. 29, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Storrs' use of italics for "nicknamed" suggests that he shared Scott's belief that "modern" abolitionism *was* "old" abolitionism.

[95] J. Horton, "The New Hampshire Conference Erect.," *Zion's Herald*, August 1, 1838, vol. 9, no. 31, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). Horton also wrote another article for the *Watchman* making the same point. See, J. Horton, "Straight Forward.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 18, 1838, vol. 3, no. 33, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

the Utica Convention.[96] P.M. Way and Schuyler Hoes offered near-identical reviews of the Oneida Conference.[97] For all their bravado of success, however, these episodes indicted a far grimmer truth for the abolition Methodists. Their benchmark for success had dramatically declined over the past three years from securing national church action against slavery in 1835-1836, to passing regional antislavery resolutions in 1837, and finally to simply surviving conferences without disciplinary trials or surrendering principles in 1838.

Scott increasingly took a hostile position against the anti-abolitionists and the Pacification Plan. That August, he wrote an article for the *Watchman* in frustration over news from the Maine Conference. "Our brethren in the Maine Conference will see what they have done, when perhaps, it shall be too late to remedy the evil," he wrote, before shining light on his overall strategy to promote abolitionism inside the church. This further explains why he found the news from Maine to be so catastrophic. He had set his sights on the 1840 general conference in Baltimore, believing that antislavery and potentially antislavery conferences needed to be prepared to elect abolitionist delegations during their 1839 annual conferences. They were only one year away from those conferences and Maine had, in Scott's view, already regressed and shown that "abolition has not much to hope" from them. He was especially frustrated that Gershom Cox had spread a narrative in the *Maine Wesleyan Journal* that suggested that the New England Conference had passed his plan. Cox's framing caught the attention of a wider audience

[96] Luther Lee., "Black River Conference Untrammeled.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 18, 1838, vol. 3, no. 33, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Lee's proclamation of success was dampened by the fact that "Nothing of importance was done..., on the subject of slavery and abolition...."

[97] P.M. Way, "Oneida Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 22, 1838, vol. 3, no. 38, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). S. Hoes, "Dear Brother.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 22, 1838, vol. 3, no. 38, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Way's review of the Oneida Conference, like Lee, favorably observed that it was "most peaceful" and expressed relief that "there appears no disposition in the Conference to oppress those who had fully embraced the doctrine of immediate emancipation." Hoes also described the Oneida Conference as "harmonious and pleasant" and, even more than Way, touted the fact that "We had no pretended angel of peace brought ... from the East." Nevertheless, the Oneida Conference, like the Black River Conference, took no action against slavery.

and sympathetic newspapers like the *Christian Advocate*, *Western Christian Advocate*, *Pittsburgh Conference Journal*, and *Auburn Banner* amplified it to a national readership. Scott made the *Christian Advocate* the central target of his frustrations, using it as an opportunity to assail their general coverage of slavery and abolition. "The last Advocate has devoted *four columns to the coronation of the Queen*," he fumed in August, contrasting that with their unwillingness to give even "one line" to "the glorious subject of emancipation...."[98] The *Liberator*, however, helped Scott present a counter-narrative that cast Cox as an "aspiring demagogue," informing readers that his plan had been "hurried through ... by means of the grossest deception,...."[99] Similarly, the Maine Conference was not a monolith and some Maine abolitionists opposed Cox's plan. J.C. Aspenwall, a minister from Prospect, complained in September that "If this is the effect of 'pacification'..., it is not a very desirable thing to be *pacified*" but nevertheless urged Scott to not let himself "be turned aside from pleading the cause of the dumb by this *little* affair."[100]

Scott continued to engage in controversies with those who supported the Pacification Plan. During the summer and fall, he wrote a series of articles in the *Watchman* on the subject, criticizing Cox for creating the plan and Phineas Crandall for endorsing it. When Cox challenged Scott to a debate in the *Maine Wesleyan Journal*, Scott replied that he found the proposal "supremely ridiculous" since Cox had not shown any willingness to discuss the subject before having delegates vote on it. "I wish he had been as much in favor of discussion when these

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[98] O. Scott, "'Pacification.,'" *Zion's Watchman*, August 11, vol. 3, no. 32, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). La Roy Sunderland complained about the same problem. See "More About the Pacification Bill.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 21, 1838, vol. 3, no. 29, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[99] "'The Pacification Plan.,'" *Liberator*, August 17, 1838, vol. 8, no. 33, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[100] J.C. Aspenwall, "Letter to Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 22, 1838, vol. 3, no. 38, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

articles were presented," he wrote, "But then the gag must be applied. Now after they are swallowed, they may be discussed."[101] Scott's controversy with Crandall, by contrast, illustrated the ways that the proposal divided abolition Methodists, sometimes bitterly. Writing in the *Zion's Herald*, Crandall objected to Scott listing him among the supporters of Cox's proposal, arguing that he was not "attached to either side."[102] Although Scott mostly justified his decision to include Crandall's name on the list of supporters for pacification, he also criticized Crandall for defending Elijah Hedding. In his open letter to Scott, Crandall had made an offhand remark about Hedding's refusal to hear Scott's antislavery petitions at the close of the conference. Crandall attributed this to an innocent "error" because Hedding, he argued, was preoccupied with making the afternoon steamboat and had been distracted in a "moment of hurry."[103] Scott had little patience for that justification, which essentially took the bishop at his word. "I am sorry that an abolitionist can be found in the New England Conference who can even originate an apology for a man who will take the source the bishop did in our conference," he fumed, adding, "NO CIRCUMSTANCE CAN JUSTIFY IT."[104]

During the 1838-1839 conference year, Scott again returned to his antislavery activities for a second consecutive year. One of his early actions that fall had been to endorse a proposal for the abolitionists to engage in greater outreach to the youth. Writing to Oliver Johnson, who

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[101] O. Scott, "Rev. G.F. Cox.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 18, 1838, vol. 3, no. 33, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[102] Crandall thanked Scott for not accusing him of being "an anti-abolitionist, a backslider, nor a neutral." Nevertheless, Crandall contested Scott's categorization of certain people as "neutrals."
[103] P. Crandall, "Letter to Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, July 25, 1838, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 17, 1838). It should also be noted that Timothy Merritt somewhat recanted his support for the Pacification Plan in October, noting that "I feel less satisfied with it as a whole, than I did when I adopted it." Merritt, however, described this as a process in which he "vacillated" between support and opposition before coming out against it. See T. Merritt, "'The Pacification Bill.,'" *Zion's Herald*, October 31, 1838, vol. 9, no. 44, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022)
[104] O. Scott, "Reply to Rev. P. Crandall.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 18, 1838, vol. 3, no. 33, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

had temporarily assumed Garrison's duties as editor of the *Liberator*, he offered an effusive endorsement of the plan. Promoting greater engagement with young Americans was not necessarily a new development. The *why* and the *how* made his support of Johnson's plan significant. As we have seen, Scott supported a diverse antislavery movement. He often painted this in denominational colors, but it applied equally as much to Americans of different ages. The youth, he believed, brought "strength and energy" to "this great moral conflict of mind with mind."[105] More importantly, Scott endorsed Johnson's view that they should bring George Thompson, the British abolitionist who had lectured in the United States in 1835, back to do more lecturing. In his view, the British abolitionists needed to bring their talents to America since slavery had just been formally abolished in the British Empire. As Scott put it to Johnson, "we need the assistance of those who have been through similar campaigns."[106] That assertion further underscores Scott's reliance on the British abolitionists as a source of inspiration, a template to emulate, and a powerful ally for future action.

Scott spent the early part of August in Massachusetts and traveled to Millennium Grove in Eastham for a Methodist camp-meeting, delivering the morning sermon on the second day.[107] Upon returning to Lowell on August 18, he penned another article against the Pacification Plan, complaining that Cox's criticisms of him were as bad or worse than those made by William Winans and Nathan Bangs. Although most of the article amounted to a defense of his earlier

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[105] Scott claimed young men could raise $50,000 a year for the society if they "put their shoulder to the wheel."

[106] Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott*, 40-41. O. Scott, "Letter from Rev. O. Scott.," *Liberator*, August 24, 1838, vol. 8, no. 34, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Slavery ended in the British Empire on August 1.

[107] La Roy Sunderland, "Camp-Meeting at Eastham, Mass.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 25, 1838, vol. 3, no. 34, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott penned another article on August 20 that offers some particulars of the New England Conference at Boston. See O. Scott, "'Rev. G.F. Cox, Again.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 1, 1838, vol. 3, no. 35, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). For Scott's August 12 letter to Gershom Cox, see O. Scott, "The Pacification Measures.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 1, 1838, vol. 3, no. 35, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

criticisms of the proposal, he again illustrated his ability to turn opposing arguments against his rivals, observing that he had been publicly attacked in a religious journal and wondering aloud if such conduct meant that Cox had violated a key provision of his own plan. However, Scott also tempered some of his earlier critiques of abolition Methodists who had tentatively supported the Pacification Plan, clarifying that he did not see them as traitors. "I believe the abolitionists have been duped by their opponents, and certain pacification managers," he wrote, adding that "they will soon see their error...." He then cited Timothy Merritt as an example and declared that he believed Merritt had "*pure motives*" even if they disagreed on Cox's plan. Scott then returned to attacking the anti-abolition Methodists and their allies to help present a united front. "Can peace be his [Cox's] object, in pursuing this one-sided and arbitrary course?" he asked, further inquiring how different "his abolition[ism]" was from "the abolitionism of the Christian Advocate."[108]

Scott's quarrel with Cox garnered him critics. One presiding elder of the Maine Conference, J.B. Husted, remarked that the reason his conference had overwhelmingly adopted Cox's proposal was because his conference was safe from "a dread of his influence." Moreover, Husted adopted a polemic course, accusing Scott of lying without explicitly saying so.[109] Even the *Zion's Herald*, which had previously been a reliable ally of Scott, took increasing umbrage with his position on Cox and the Pacification Plan. William C. Brown, the editor of the *Herald* since 1836 and an ally of the abolition Methodists, emerged as a critic of Scott's radical

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[108] O. Scott, "Rev. G.F. Cox In Trouble.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 25, 1838, vol. 3, no. 34, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[109] J.B. Husted, "Another Pacificator.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 1, 1838, vol. 3, no. 35, p. 2-3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022. To avoid making a direct charge of falsehood, Husted carefully worded his allegations by saying that Scott had "want of ability to state 'clear truth.'"

course.[110] Scott made his break with the *Herald* official at the end of August, writing to the *Watchman* that he would “offer nothing more for publication” to it.[111]

Hoping for “a little rest” on the pacification controversy, Scott traveled to Concord, New Hampshire to attend an antislavery meeting with Henry B. Stanton on August 21.[112] During the meeting, Scott delivered a speech which Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, the editor of the *Herald of Freedom*, praised effusively. Scott’s evening lecture, delivered at Concord’s Baptist meetinghouse, was “a stern, plain, ... John Wesley argument, demonstrating away the excuses and subterfuges of slavery- and making the abolition highway as ‘broad’ as ‘the App[lachi]an road,’ and so plain, that no wayfaring man can contrive to puzzle himself into error therein,....” Rogers had not simply praised Scott’s speech. He had reaffirmed a point which William Lloyd Garrison had made a year before: that Orange Scott was a modern successor to John Wesley. And, according to Rogers, if Scott was the American heir to Wesley, then Stanton was “O’Connell without his Romanism – A Protestant O’Connell.”[113] Rogers’ praise for Scott illustrated that his brand of abolitionism continued to garner sympathy from a broad coalition that prioritized purity of principle over denominational differences.

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[110] The rift between Scott and Brown began in early August after Brown refused to print Scott’s “Address” in the *Zion’s Herald*. This rather small controversy ballooned into a larger rift between the two men. For his part, Brown felt Scott’s overreacted to what he considered a minor issue; Scott, however, saw it as a matter of “principle” because it amounted to censorship of his anti-pacification views. In that sense, Scott believed he was opposing the “*precedent* of future operations....”. Ultimately, this was somewhat ameliorated when Brown eventually agreed to publish the “Address” on March 6, 1839. See “O. Scott, “An Address.,” *Zion’s Herald*, March 6, 1839, vol. 10, no. 11, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed December 2, 2022).

[111] O. Scott, “Free Discussion.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, September 8, 1838, vol. 3, no. 36, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[112] O. Scott, “Rev. G.F. Cox In Trouble.,” *Zion’s Watchman*, August 25, 1838, vol. 3, no. 34, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[113] “Anti-Slavery Convention in New Hampshire.,” *Pennsylvania Freeman*, August 30, 1838, vol. 4, no. 25, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Rogers further praised Scott and Stanton by observing that “our brethren who staid at home, lost thereby rare intellectual and spiritual treats – reflecting draughts at the sparkling anti-slavery fountain.”

The fall of 1838, however, should be viewed as a period of larger antislavery fragmentation, especially for the abolition Methodists. The Pacification Plan further divided an already divided Methodist Episcopal Church by straining its antislavery wing. But the dissension did not end there. At the same time, Orange Scott increasingly found himself at odds with some of his own antislavery allies, most notably William Lloyd Garrison, H.C. Wright, and Oliver Johnson. This marked a rather sudden shift that largely overlapped chronologically with the fracturing of the antislavery movement on the axes of voting and women's rights. As late as September 21, the *Liberator* continued to discuss Scott in highly favorable, if not hagiographic terms, even likening him to influential British writer and preacher Dr. Thomas Scott. The paper depicted Orange Scott's views in line with his British counterpart, and produced a hypothetical rebuttal from anti-abolition Methodists that underscored how Orange and Thomas Scott were one and the same on issues of abolition, human rights, and equality. The *Liberator* even tacitly endorsed a measure of political involvement in the form of petitioning.[114] Days later, the Lynn Anti-Slavery Society unanimously voted to invite fourteen abolitionists to lecture on slavery in Lynn. This list included Orange Scott as well as Garrison, Wright, and Johnson.[115] As late as September 1838, then, Scott and Garrison stood united.

September and October 1838, however, marked a significant turning point. In September, Garrison and Wright attended a peace convention in Boston that led to the formation of the New England Non-Resistance Society. Its declaration of sentiments affirmed the "principles" of non-resistance, which Garrison aptly summarized as "denying to man the right to take redress of

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[114] "Dr. Scott on Political Anti-Slavery Action.," *Liberator*, September 21, 1838 vol. 8, no. 38, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[115] Wm. Bassett, "Anti-Slavery Lectures in Lynn.," *Liberator*, September 28, 1838, vol. 8, no. 39, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

injuries into his own hands, or to hold dominion over another;...."[116] Wright, similarly, endorsed the "holy, magnanimous, and Christ-like principle" upon which the society had been founded, arguing that adherents should emulate the Jesus Christ who "conquered by love,...." The implications of this sentiment, however, led both Garrison and Wright to arrive at very extreme conclusions that made antislavery cooperation with Scott and other evangelical abolitionists more difficult. If no person could hold "dominion" over another, then that not only made slavery as an untenable institution; it made *every* institution untenable. "I will appeal to no unearthly tribunal, no constable, sheriff, police, judge, magistrate – to no man, no legislative, judicial, or executive human tribunal," Wright declared in the days after the convention, adding that just as he would not appeal to those institutions, neither would he "aid, as witness, juryman, or otherwise..." For Garrison and Wright, the juxtaposition was clear. A person either put their "trust" in God or the "sword" as Wright put it; they either affirmed "the violability of human life" or took the position of the "moderate fighters" that endorsed "blowing out a man's brains in self-defence" as Garrison proclaimed.[117] These positions left little room for compromise.

The introduction of non-resistance into antislavery discourse placed considerable strain on the movement because it revealed significant disagreements over principle. In the same way Scott could not affirm the Pacification Plan because he believed it would force him to compromise principle, Garrison and Wright adopted an increasingly hardened position that he feared would force him and other abolition Methodists to violate their principles. Garrison, more

[116] W.L.G., "The Peace Convention.," *Liberator*, September 28, 1838, vol. 8, no. 39, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[117] H.C. Wright, "Peace Convention.," *Liberator*, September 28, 1838, vol. 8, no. 39, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). W.L.G., "The Peace Convention.," *Liberator*, September 28, 1838, vol. 8, no. 39, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). For a succinct overview of non-resistance, see "Synopsis of the Principles of the Non-Resistance Society," *Liberator*, October 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 43, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

so than Wright, was aware of the reality that not all abolitionists supported non-resistance. Amid his coverage of the Boston Peace Convention, he assured readers of the *Liberator* that the paper would remain "an anti-slavery publication" and reaffirmed his commitment to petitioning the government to abolish slavery in Washington, D.C. However, in both instances, Garrison revealed an issue that would prove to be divisive and ultimately fatal for the antislavery movement: his intention to include a "discussion of the Peace question" in the *Liberator*. Although he promised coverage of it would be "merely incidental," this reporting came from an increasingly sympathetic lens.[118] Garrison's plans, while seemingly innocuous, quickly became a powder keg that helped rupture the antislavery movement.

The rift between Orange Scott and antislavery adherents to non-resistance proved to be deeply divisive because, although it was a battle of personality in some capacity, it also represented the way both sides misunderstood one another and the unity of their movement. Furthermore, the debate between Scott and Garrison can only be understood when integrated within the principle-policy paradigm and the concept of a model society that Scott articulated in his *Appeal*. Both sides clashed on that shared foundation. Non-Resistants like Wright and Garrison increasingly viewed the peace movement as inexorably connected with abolitionism while Scott vacillated on deciding whether he saw non-resistance as an extraneous policy position or a principle antithetical to abolitionism. Ultimately, Scott arrived at the latter position

[118] W.L.G., "The Peace Convention.," 3. It is worth noting that the *Liberator* did, at least early in the controversy, make an earnest effort to promote objectivity and neutrality on the subject. On October 19, 1838, the day when the *Liberator* announced it would give non-resistance a greater place in the paper's coverage, they included newspapers hostile to the movement, including a republishing of William C. Brown's reaction to the Boston Peace Convention. They did this without providing editorial comment. As Brown put it, "Some of these [positions adopted at the convention] are very good; but others are inconsistent and utterly impracticable. They are the product of a misguided or morbid intellect, and would bring society back to the state of barbarism." Abolition Methodists like Scott would walk a similar line to Brown: embracing the overarching goal of peace while strenuously disagreeing with certain measures and means. See "Untitled.," *Liberator*, October 19, 1838, vol. 8, no. 42, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 18, 2022).

and formally broke with Garrison in 1840. During this debate, however, both sides drew from their religious convictions and made them far less willing to compromise or look for common ground. This produced a mutual fear from the two camps that the other side sought to enforce a litmus test for abolitionism: the Garrisonians feared Scott demanded they violate their principles and vote, while Scott worried that non-resistance, like anti-abolition Methodism, made the work of reform impossible. The struggle between Scott and Garrison was in no small measure a clash between two often polemical personalities, but it also revealed the significant distinctions between two men that a shared commitment to emancipation and racial equality had obscured.[119]

This debate would further cement the contradictions in Scott's belief system. His Methodist opponents saw him as an extremist and a radical; yet the Garrisonians increasingly deprecated him because of his conservative reservations about non-resistance. Understanding this dichotomy is essential toward understanding Scott's worldview and his larger historical legacy. Although he ultimately threw his support behind political abolitionism, he remained deeply Garrisonian in many respects. Orange Scott, then, offers historians the unique portrait of an individual caught between two antislavery factions who, as we will see, ultimately charted his own path as an abolitionist and a Christian.

One of the central challenges that Scott faced in this debate, unlike his controversy with Thomas Whittemore in the 1820s, was the scope of the argument. He was not simply debating a person. While he often viewed himself as debating Garrison personally, he also faced two additional opponents: Henry C. Wright and Oliver Johnson. As a result, the *Liberator's* coverage of the Scott-Garrison debate inevitably proved slanted in much the same way as the Scott-

[119] Neither Scott's autobiography nor Matlack's biography of Scott discuss his falling out with Garrison. This is a glaring oversight in both works. In most cases where Scott spoke little of an event, he referenced works that he believed were more authoritative than his own memory. He did not do this for his clash with Garrison. The reasons for this absence are unclear.

Whittemore controversy over Universalism had been. Scott would write articles, Garrison would leave in-line citations as a response, Wright would pen his own articles against Scott, and Johnson would further leave commentary in the *Liberator*.

Garrison announced his intentions to fully open the *Liberator* to a discussion of non-resistance on October 19, 1838. Although he made a "promise" to opponents of non-resistance that they would be "fairly heard" and "have no cause of complaint," it is important to note that even his announcement framed the discussion in a way that weighed the scale. The subject was to be over "the momentous gospel non-resistance" – a declaratory framing of the point that non-resistance *was* a Gospel doctrine – and further juxtaposed the debate as being between "our peaceful and belligerous correspondents."[120] While this may not have been intentional on Garrison's part, it nevertheless illustrates a central problem with the discussion on a foundational level. As will be seen, the non-resistants largely viewed the debate as an opportunity to bring recalcitrant abolitionists to what they saw as the correct position – the only one – that abolitionists should hold.

Orange Scott, described by Garrison as "our estimable brother," was the first person named as a correspondent in this discussion. Garrison, however, warned that Scott's "very long" letter "assails the sentiments of the Declaration [of Sentiments of the Peace Convention] with much vehemence" and added his "opinion" that it was "by no means worthy of his head our heart." Garrison went further, likening it to proslavery commentary. Nevertheless, he ended by telling readers that "we commend him for his readiness to step into the arena, and do battle for

[120] "To Correspondents.," *Liberator*, October 19, 1838, vol. 8, no. 42, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (November 18, 2022).

what he considers to be the right" even if his support for "carnal weapons" would assuredly fail when confronted by "those spiritual weapons which are mighty."[121]

On October 20, upon reading Garrison's commentary, Scott penned a short letter to "Friend Garrison" that would be published alongside his main article. He immediately identified his problems with Garrison's intended format for the debate, notably that Garrison had let his bias influence how he planned to cover the issue. Scott singled out two points. First, he complained that Garrison had critiqued his article a week before it would be published. "I was a little surprised that you had passed judgment upon my article before publishing it," he wrote, adding that doing so made it harder for "the article to speak for itself" since he had sounded "the note of alarm *in advance....*" He added: "I hardly expected this pre-judging from my *open-hearted* friend and brother, WM. LLOYD GARRISON!" Second, Scott criticized Garrison's characterization of the debate, which clearly came from a non-resistance perspective rather than a neutral one. He emphasized Garrison's framing of opposition to non-resistance as being in support of "carnal weapons." While Scott affirmed that he "advocated human governments" and acknowledged that governments required weapons to sustain it, he replied, "I would have preferred, that my sentiments should have been given in my own language."[122] Scott then provided his thesis. "I believe human governments may exist, without taking life, in any instance," he declared, "And if to punish thieves, robbers, adulterers and murders with imprisonment or fine, is using 'carnal weapons,' then, in this sense, I am for their use." His argument had little to do with the permissibility of the death penalty or the idea of "taking life" as he put it, because his larger concern was for sustaining human governments, "not every form

[121] "To Correspondents.," *Liberator*, 3.
[122] Scott seemed to take offense at Garrison's characterization of his communication as being "very long" given that Scott referenced that line twice in this short letter.

of them, but the thing itself – i.e. *some form*."[123] From the very onset of the debate, then, Scott introduced the position he would eventually arrive at: he and Garrison were divided over first principles, not minor policies.

In a reply that portended ill for the state of the discussion, Garrison largely dismissed Scott's criticisms. "Why complain?" he asked of Scott's stated preference that his language be preserved, adding that Scott's support for human governments and Garrison's characterization of his support for carnal weapons was "a distinction without a difference." But then Garrison turned to a far more compelling rebuttal: Scott called non-resistance "no human government theory" while the non-resistants preferred "the *DIVINE* government theory."[124] This episode underscores one of the recurring problems in the debate between Scott and the Garrisonians: both had legitimate grievances against one another, and neither side adopted the requisite introspection that could have pacified the simmering tensions.

Scott's article on the Boston Peace Convention, entitled "The No Human Government Theory," was based on a perusal of the convention's proceedings, constitution, declaration of sentiments, and Garrison and Wright's coverage. In much the same way he had debated Universalism and the anti-abolition Methodists by fashioning himself as the true conservative, his fundamental objection to non-resistance rested on identical grounds: it was a "*new theory*."[125] Just as he contrasted traditional Christian theology with Universalism and primitive Methodism with modern Methodism, he also differentiated what he considered the cause of peace with non-

[123] O. Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," *Liberator*, October 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 43, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott's views on the death penalty are somewhat ambiguous, although he undoubtedly supported peace principles insofar as opposing aggression. He was supportive of self-defense. He condemned offensive wars and endorsed a person's right to defend their private property.
[124] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3.
[125] O. Scott, "The No Human Government Theory.," *Liberator*, October 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 43, p. 3, Accessible Archives (accessed November 19, 2022).

resistance. To him, the latter used legitimate sympathy for the former as a means to an end. This led Scott to worry that non-resistance could soon become a pillar of antislavery orthodoxy, and he cited quotes from Garrison to prove his point. As he succinctly put it, "I am sorry to see this new measure come limping into being upon the crutches of 'peace,' and 'abolition.'"[126] These two laudable movements, Scott lamented, had created a "*Monster*!"[127]

Although he objected to the way the convention had been portrayed and connected to the antislavery movement, he spent most of his article on "the principle upon which it is based." According to Scott, non-resistance rested on the premise that "*All human governments are wrong, because none but God have a right to govern*" and, because of that, "*all human laws are bad,....*" He employed the same strategy he had used against Whittemore and examined how the theory looked in practice. In this case, he explored what he termed "*essential* features of your ultra non-resistance theme" and cited real-world examples such as "the innocent female [who] must not resist the unprincipled violator of her chastity...." He pressed the same line of argumentation further and reaffirmed his support for a restrained theology and ordered liberty that acknowledged human capacity for evil. Where Whittemore sought to reform people by assuring them that God loved them, Scott worried that Garrison was promoting a theory that believed "lions [were] to be converted into lambs, by letting them out of their cages."[128]

Once again, this rested on the concept of free agency, a term that Scott explicitly invoked in his communication. Because humans had the ability to choose to be good or evil, temporal institutions were an important consideration. One could and should "trust in God" if they were

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[126] Scott took issue with Garrison's assertion that the Non-Resistance Society was "proof that abolitionists are men of one idea" and his claim that the convention was "composed almost exclusively of thorough-going abolitionists."
[127] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3.
[128] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3. Scott explicitly echoed this same theory by asking Garrison, "Are demons in human form, who can scarcely be restrained by prisoners and scaffolds, to be turned loose upon community, without any restraint? So it would seem."

thrown into “a den of lions” like the prophet Daniel, but that same trust could not also apply for the person who “voluntarily” freed those very lions.[129] Free will meant humans needed to take matters into their own hands in a fallen world. Governments and laws were one such mechanism.

Scott’s Wheel of Reform became a fixture of this argument. While that process required moral suasion and placed it as the instigator of reform, governments were an important component too. They existed to protect freedom of speech so that moral suasion could occur. That was precisely why Scott had condemned the Winslow-Snow definition of republican liberty. He told this to Garrison, hypothesizing that if the non-resistants succeeded in abolishing all laws in the United States then there would be no institutions that could act as “shields” from “northern and southern vengeance.” While he believed moral suasion was integral to reform, he did not believe it alone would resolve the problem of immorality. Society, he wrote, was composed of an often-apathetic majority and “a depraved unprincipled minority.” Scott believed the former could be persuaded, but argued that even if the majority of people were persuaded to become good for their own sake, then there still existed that latter class of moral degenerates – the “libertines, drunkards, thieves, robbers, and murderers” – who Scott feared could never be persuaded by “the promulgation of a mere theory....”[130] As he put it later in the communication, “What do wicked men care about religious considerations?”[131] In much the same way slavery would need to be abolished because not all slaveholders would emancipate their slaves, so too did humanity need laws and legal penalties to serve as a check on the depraved minority.

Given that both Scott and Garrison were deeply religious, albeit in different ways, this dispute necessarily rested upon the Bible and their Christian faith. Since Garrison himself used

[129] Scott, “Letter from O. Scott.,” 3.
[130] The depraved, Scott wrote, “have no resistance to fear” and could not be stopped by moral suasion.
[131] Scott, “Letter from O. Scott.,” 3.

Scripture to justify his position, Scott also turned to the Bible as an authority.[132] Like many other religious conservatives, Scott believed government was established by God. For Scott, this did not mean God offered a blanket endorsement of all forms of government, it simply meant that God approved of the concept of human government as a means to prevent anarchy. He turned to St. Paul's letter to the Romans for support. Human governments did not nullify divine government; they were meant to serve as an extension of God's law. "We all hold to the government of God as strongly as you do – and therefore we are for human governments," he told Garrison, adding that "We believe that enlightened human governments are calculated rather to hasten than retard the universal reign of Christ." As such, reform could not occur by giving people "full liberty" since many would be predisposed to "commit all manner of crimes."[133]

Scott's objections to non-resistance also rested on a traditionalist slippery slope argument and a conservative fear of what he had termed "innovation" in his *Appeal*. The non-resistance movement, he worried, would abolish human government, and eventually destroy all institutions in society from "the marriage contract" to voluntary associations. Given Scott's emphasis on principle, he saw the shift from political institutions to social institutions as inevitable. His opposition, however, was not entirely based on principle. He also disliked that William Lloyd Garrison personally supported the movement. This stemmed from his personal admiration for Garrison and his fears that his celebrity would strengthen non-resistance. "You will have *adherents* – you will get a *party*," Scott wrote, adding that "every *ism*" from Mormonism to

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[132] Garrison's scriptural argument rested on Matthew 5:38-40, the passages calling for Christians to "resist not evil" and turn the other cheek. Scott, however, argued that this "strong hold" only applied for "personal injuries" not to the abolition of human government and all laws.

[133] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3. Scott cited Romans 13 to support his position.

Fanny Wright-ism could garner supporters. But someone like Garrison could bolster any movement. "A man of your powers and influence," he worried, "*cannot stand alone*."[134]

This did not mean that Scott believed Garrison should be silenced. Free will and freedom of speech meant that Scott felt Garrison could embrace any theory he wished and promote it in his own newspaper. Those rights, however, also came with consequences. In Scott's view, non-resistance was a breaking point because it extended beyond the mere policy and superficial disagreements that had previously characterized antislavery dissension. It was a matter of principle itself. Scott, who said he could "go with you [Garrison] in your strongest views" on slavery, emancipation, and even the clergy, admitted that non-resistance was a bridge too far. "I cannot sustain you," he wrote, "nay, I must oppose you."[135]

Scott then turned to a brief discussion of the "'woman question,'" which he said was "a small evil, compared with the other [non-resistance]." His support for traditional gender roles rested on his belief in gender complementarianism. "I know they [women] were *helpers* to the apostles," he wrote, "but they were not *leaders*." He similarly argued that even the "most careless reader of the Bible" could understand "that women were never designed for the performance of the same public duties that men are." Nevertheless, Scott also offered nuance on this issue. "I am for women's rights, as well as men's," he wrote, adding that he believed it would be far preferable to live in a society where women made laws than live in a state of anarchy. While women had rights, he also believed that these were "scriptural rights" and he therefore did not see women as political figures. This did not, however, mean that Scott believed women had no role in society; he saw them as vital inculcators of morality. It had been a work by Lydia Maria Child, after all, which helped convert him to abolitionism. "Female societies, and

[134] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3.
[135] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3.

female conventions, I approve," he declared before qualifying that he still opposed women taking "public action" or serving in "promiscuous assemblies."[136]

The last component of Scott's opening communication rested on reiterating his belief that political action was a necessary component of moral reform. Moral suasion moved people, but reform eventually required political and legal action. Scott succinctly summarized this view:

> Suppose all the abolitionists in the country were to act on your principles,... when would such men be elected to congress as would abolish slavery in the District of Columbia? And suppose all good men were to stay away from the polls, and refuse to accept of any office – in what hands would the administration of law soon be placed? So far from believing all human governments wrong, I believe it would be a *sin* against God and humanity to adopt your principles, and practice upon them – a sin for which God might justly doom the nation to destruction, should such principles and conduct become general,.... In the room of adopting your loose and demoralizing views, (for such I consider them,) abolitionists, and all other good men, should feel their political responsibility more than ever, and act accordingly. ... The virtuous part of the nation needs stimulants, not opiates. The good men of the country should be aroused and brought to the polls, *en masse*.[137]

While Scott believed that Christians and reformers needed to engage in politics, this did not mean he endorsed every example of government or, as we will see, the existing system of party politics. "That abuses, and great abuses, exist in politics, is admitted," he wrote," but the science of government should be *reformed*, not *destroyed*. And who is to reform it, if good men abandon it?" This would become the central cornerstone of Scott's opposition to non-resistance. The solution to *bad* government was not *no* government, but *good* government. And government was a mirror in the sense that it did not necessarily shape society: it reflected society.

At the time, Scott saw his article as a simple opportunity to express his views on the subject and be done with it. Garrison, however, saw matters differently. In an act which he even admitted would be uncharacteristic for his paper's discussion of non-resistance, he offered a

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[136] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3. Scott added that few Methodists would support non-resistance or woman rights.
[137] Scott, "Letter from O. Scott.," 3.

direct rejoinder. He prefaced his remarks by warning readers that the "extreme length" of Scott's letter meant that he would have to forgo an "elaborate reply." Nevertheless, his article was about two and a half columns: approximately the same length as Orange Scott's.[138] While Garrison opened by praising "the zeal displayed by our bro. Scott," he initially fixed his criticism upon a "style" he claimed was "obviously contemptuous" and a "spirit" he characterized as "palpably uncharitable." But his reply soon shifted into the polemical, characterizing Scott as Don Quixote jousting at windmills, criticizing his use of "men of straw," and mocking Scott's sense of urgency by acting "as if the fate of the republic was suspended upon the issue."[139]

Garrison's reply is noteworthy because it revealed the substantial differences in principle between the two men, differences which their shared abolitionism had palliated or perhaps obscured. While Scott saw the issue of peace as a complicated problem, Garrison cast the choice at the peace convention as a simple matter between "the side of 'ultraism, or on that of 'physical violence.'" Although he dedicated considerable space to defending the Boston Peace Convention, his argument took a more significant turn when it shifted to addressing Scott's fear that he planned to connect non-resistance and abolitionism. "So far as unity of thought and object is concerned, abolitionists are agreed upon the 'self-evident truths' of the Declaration of Independence," he said, "but, respecting all other subjects, they differ widely in sentiment." This view of antislavery unity was no different from Scott's. But while Garrison explained that he would not make non-resistance a pillar of antislavery orthodoxy, he admitted that he saw abolitionists as being predisposed to accept other radical ideas. Abolitionists, he wrote, were

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[138] As Garrison told readers, "We do not propose to make a formal rejoinder to every *belligerous* essay that may find a place in our columns." Garrison, it should be noted, also promised readers "we are willing to place before our readers the strongest arguments that can be urged, generally without note or comment." This is important to note now because Scott's subsequent articles were heavily annotated by William Lloyd Garrison and Oliver Johnson.
[139] "Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, October 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 43, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

"able and stout-hearted coadjutors in the holy and blessed enterprise." When confronted with Scott's comparison of non-resistance with Mormonism and Fanny Wright, he was incredulous and likened it to a person who erroneously cried "'mad dog'!"[140] Ultimately, Garrison justified intermingling abolition and non-resistance by saying he simply saw the potential for cross-pollination between two similar reform movements.

Garrison also incorporated another argument that would become a recurring feature in the debate: he likened Scott to their shared enemies, noting that he was now keeping "company" with "the brutal editors of the *N.Y. Journal of Commerce*" and "a host of unprincipled men."[141] This rhetorical technique would be used to suggest that Scott's abolitionism was insincere solely because he opposed non-resistance. Garrison's radicalism on the issue of non-resistance, however, should also be filtered through Scott's own concept of the model society. In reply to Scott's question about biblical authority, Garrison offered a simple answer: "We find it in the precepts of the PRINCE OF PEACE." For Garrison, like Scott, the answer to a corrupt present could be found in an idyllic model from the past. If the cure for anti-abolition Methodism in the present was John Wesley, then the cure for a belligerent world was Jesus Christ. He further made this more conservative appeal explicit by rejecting the characterization of non-resistance as a novel innovation; it was "more than 1800 years old."[142] Garrison's radicalism was, in some respects, a mirror of Scott's own conservativism.

Like Whittemore, however, Garrison articulated a philosophical and theological view that fundamentally diminished human agency. For Garrison, humanity did not need self-defense or

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[140] "Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, 3.

[141] Garrison said this rhetorical tactic was an effective means to furnish "*prima facie* evidence of the rottenness of the side which they espouse." He further remarked that Scott's comments on women were "too much in the style of the Journal of Commerce to deserve any attention. They are not what we could have expected from such a source."

[142] "Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, 3. Garrison also applied this same theory to American republicanism, which he touted as being "sound" and admitted that he hoped to correct the "violation of it" rather than seeing it "abandoned."

basic governmental institutions because he believed God would protect him.[143] This perspective rested on a similarly optimistic ground as Whittemore, who believed humans had the capacity to embrace goodness for its own sake. Garrison offered an extensive outline of a world in which all Americans adopted non-resistance but crossed that threshold from present to future with little more than a wave of a hand. Garrison only arrived at a potential answer in the final sentences of his rejoinder, and his answer amounted to faith in God and moral suasion. "Has not bro. Scott changed the 'dispositions' of a multitude of people by promulgated the 'theory of immediate emancipation?" he asked, adding that one only needed faith the size of a mustard seed.[144]

Scott's first article on non-resistance and Garrison's reply are important because they underscore the content, tone, and tenor of the debate from its origins through the ultimate fracturing of the antislavery movement. Both agreed on the issue of slavery, but as the issues of non-resistance and women's rights increasingly became topics of consideration, that unity became increasingly fragile. There was a clear divergence between how both sides spoke of the issue of non-resistance and what they really believed. This explains why Scott and his opponents increasingly went from seeing one another as misguided allies to bitter enemies. Even as principle loomed over the debate, Scott and Garrison at first envisioned their disagreements over non-resistance as a policy dispute around a shared commitment to peace. As would become increasingly apparent, neither side truly felt that way. Both disagreed on the principles that created non-resistance and, given Garrison's expressed belief that antislavery principles were non-resistance principles, Scott eventually concluded that the only solutions before him were avoiding the discussion or forcing a confrontation. He ultimately chose the latter.

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[143] "Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, 3. Garrison wrote, "If our life is 'bid with Christ in God,' we need not fear for its safety." Near the end of his reply, he added, "They feel that they are lambs in the midst of wolves, but their trust is in the good Shepherd,...."

[144] "Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, 3. This is a reference to Matthew 17:20.

Conscience, as the conduit between principle and policy, is also an important element in this debate. Both Scott and Garrison, however, understood conscience in different ways. For Garrison, conscience afforded him the right to abstain from politics, voting, and officeholding. By contrast, Scott believed conscience was a duty that impelled citizens to vote for antislavery policy. But non-resistance was bound to the dictates of individual conscience and could not easily be set aside by its supporters and critics. Political action in any capacity touched on non-resistance principles and inexorably connected it with the antislavery movement. Any effort in the antislavery movement to resolve the question of voting and campaigning, then, was an assault on the consciences of supporters or critics of non-resistance. What follows will explore the contours of this debate from 1838 through 1840 and, when appropriate, introduce and discuss the intellectual elements of that debate.

One of the greatest problems to antislavery unity rested on Garrison's coverage of the debate. Although Scott's opening communication contained strong, even polemical rhetoric against the theory and idea of non-resistance, it largely avoided delving into personality. In the same way he deprecated Universalism rather than Universalists, he condemned non-resistance without assailing non-resistants. Nevertheless, it did not take long for personality to become a consideration. Garrison did not simply leave the issue as a side-by-side juxtaposition of Scott's communication and his rejoinder. Doing so would have left the question of a victor to the readers and kept the discussion focused on the principles. Instead, Garrison curated his coverage of the issue to establish a narrative and, more specifically, to attack Orange Scott. Garrison committed to this course as early as October 26, the day Scott's article appeared in the *Liberator*. While he did initially publish material critical of non-resistance, he filtered it through a non-resistance lens. In one instance, he held up a letter from "beloved friend" Nathaniel Peabody Rogers as an

example of how opponents of non-resistance should argue, and explicitly contrasted his "candor and magnanimity" with "the contemptuous and headlong spirit ... of our bro. Scott." While Rogers quibbled with certain aspects of the non-resistance movement, he still heaped praise on the Peace Convention and championed "our giant-hearted brother Garrison."[145] Rogers' criticisms, then, were praiseworthy because they were mild and they avoided attacking the underlying principles of the movement.

By the fall of 1838, Orange Scott had found himself in a movement divided on two fronts. Although his Methodist supporters had stymied the Pacification Plan, the controversy marked the first cracks in abolition Methodist unity. His increasingly radical posture against episcopal church government and perceived ecclesiastical overreach alienated some of his more conversative allies like Phineas Crandall and William C. Brown. At the same time, Scott's fundamentally conservative inclinations led him into a controversy with his radical allies in the larger antislavery movement. His debate with Garrison, which began in the aftermath of the Boston Peace Convention, served as the logical culmination of Scott's writings and actions since January 1838. In those months, Scott had adopted a radical posture against the Methodist Episcopal Church but grounded his opposition to present corruption with a reaffirmation of first principles and institutions *in general*. Scott's displeasure with existing institutions, then, stemmed from his belief that institutions themselves were a positive good. That perspective dramatically differed from Garrison, who had concluded that corrupted institutions in the present meant that the institutions themselves needed to be discarded. Where Garrison rejected, Scott

[145] "Peace Convention At Boston.," *Liberator*, October 26, 1838, vol. 8, no. 34, p. 1, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 22, 2022). Rogers, it should be noted, did not worry that free discussion between supporters and opponents of non-resistance would threaten antislavery unity. As he wrote, "The non-resistance question, the no-government question, the woman question, the n---- question – let them all be discussed in fairness and honor, and we will risk the consequences, though it may make some of the 'craftsmen' sweat. These questions make no part of the anti-slavery doctrines. Genuine abolitionists will of course differ upon them,...."

advocated reclamation and, if that failed, he endorsed restoration. This debate that helped tear the antislavery movement apart is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 10: Orange Scott vs. William Lloyd Garrison, Part II

About three weeks after writing his first article for the *Liberator*, Scott penned a second article. In an offhanded – or, more likely, backhanded – concession to Garrison, he spoke in his opening sentence of "the no human (alias 'the divine'!) government theory."[1] The tone of his reply did little to pacify the emerging rift within the antislavery movement. For his part, however, he argued that he had no intention to engage in a "protracted discussion" for two reasons: he did not wish to give non-resistance increased publicity and he felt "More important matters claim my attention." In his view, the "object" of his October article had been "*simply to give my views*."[2]

The primary object of Scott's reply was to highlight what he considered to be the inconsistency of non-resistance abolitionism. He singled out the seemingly contradictory position on petitioning as a case study. This must be viewed through the principle-policy paradigm because it is an example of how both sides differed on principle and policy. To Scott, the logic was simple: if abolitionists supported petitioning governments to end slavery, then it stood to reason that governments were legitimate authorities. "Can they repeal those laws without POLITICAL ACTION?" he asked Garrison, pressing further a few sentences later with the conclusion that "if it be right, for Congress to repeal the slave laws, it must be right for Congress to exist...." This suggested that abolition and non-resistance principles were distinct because abolition policies could not be reconciled with non-resistance principles. "You ask the same [emancipation], and yet go against the very existence of the only body that can do this!" he

[1] For his part, Garrison took the statement as a "sneer."
[2] O. Scott, "Human Governments.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, vol. 8, no. 46, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). It should be noted that Scott attempted to clarify his "monster" statement, assuring Garrison that he had not "branded 'you,' or any other person, as a 'monster,'...."

declared, invoking the Wheel of Reform and the ways non-resistance crippled it.[3] Both men agreed in the primacy and necessity of moral suasion, but Scott believed human nature meant legal suasion was required to secure and institutionalize reform.

Scott, however, continued to incorporate some modicum of personality into the debate. As seen in his October 26 communication, he feared Garrison throwing his support behind non-resistance meant that the theory would continue to grow and eventually transform the antislavery movement. These fears stemmed from Scott's belief that Garrison was the leader of American abolitionism. The controversy over non-resistance, however, began to strain his confidence that Garrison should continue to hold that position. More abolitionists would have rejected non-resistance, he wrote, if not for their fear of Garrison. "They dread to encounter the lion-hearted Garrison!" Scott proclaimed before assuring readers, "But, I thank God, I am delivered from all such fear." He then ended his communication by outlining his motivation for wanting to be done with the debate over non-resistance: it had no bearing on their shared work as abolitionists. "Let us, then, keep to our 'appropriate work,'" he told Garrison, ending his letter with the valediction, "your fellow laborer in the great work of 'abolishing American Slavery.'"[4]

The discussion from the November 16 number of the *Liberator* underscored the ways the coverage of the paper did little to facilitate constructive or fair discussion of the subject. If Scott tended toward polemics in his opposition to non-resistance, Garrison and his allies adopted a similar tone and attitude. This can be seen in the extent of coverage. For example, Garrison had complained that Scott wrote a long article and claimed he wrote a short reply that ended up being roughly identical in length to the one he complained about. In the November 16 number, Scott's reply was roughly two-thirds of a column while Garrison's remarks on that article were nearly a

[3] Scott, "Human Governments.," 4.
[4] Scott, "Human Governments.," 4.

full column in length. This echoed a similar trend seen in Scott's earlier debate with Whittemore. Garrison also increasingly brought Scott's opposition to non-resistance into other stories, articles, and commentary. When republishing an article from the *Christian Statemen's* Ralph Randolph Gurley that condemned the Boston Peace Convention, Garrison opted to liken critics of non-resistance to anti-abolitionists and explicitly compared Scott to Gurley. This marked the second time in three weeks that Garrison made that kind of comparison.[5]

Garrison's tone proved to be at least as polemical as Scott's. After complaining that Scott's attacks were snide or vicious, Garrison promptly mocked Scott's second article. "Having given the 'Non-Resistants' one broadside, with the courage and promptness of military heroism," he jeered, "is suddenly disposed to retire from the conflict;...."[6] Although his notations on Scott's letter offered a more substantive rebuttal, he nevertheless ridiculed Scott's argument as lacking "a tangible shape" and he described the support for legal penalties as "his anxiety to hang murderers, and imprison thieves and robbers."[7] Henry C. Wright, similarly replied in late November that Scott had "more contemptuously scout[ed]" the Gospel than Voltaire, David Hume, Bolingbroke, and Edward Gibbon.[8] Garrison endorsed Wright's essay, approvingly saying that "bro. Wright exhibits in a striking light the injustice and insanity of those individuals, who are denouncing the pacific views of the Society,...."[9]

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[5] "New Society.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, vol. 8, no. 46, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Garrison mentioned Scott twice by name in his preface to the Gurley article and ended by noting, "We think bro. S.[cott] is in bad company."
[6] "Bro. Scott's Reply.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, vol. 8, no. 46, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[7] "Human Governments.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, vol. 8, no. 46, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[8] H.C. Wright, "Luceo Non Uro.," *Liberator*, November 30, 1838, vol. 8, no. 48, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[9] "The Work Begun.," *Liberator*, November 30, 1838, vol. 8, no. 48, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Given that Wright's essay discussed Joseph Tracy of the *New York Observer*, Orange Scott, and George Beckwith, this remark assuredly refers to Scott.

There are three notable components to the debate that can be gleaned from Garrison's rejoinder. First, the debate was over principle from its opening weeks. "He [Scott] regards the principles we have enunciated as so absurd and preposterous," Garrison complained. But the identity of these principles remained ambiguous. It could not be questions of the supremacy of divine law to human law or even a broader opposition to violence; both Scott and Garrison agreed on those points. They ultimately disagreed on the very legitimacy of temporal authority because non-resistance principles led Garrison to oppose all human governments, legal penalties, and political power. Scott saw that question as distinct from abolitionism while Garrison increasingly integrated radical reform into a singular worldview.[10] Second, Garrison offered a curt but underdeveloped response to Scott's question about politics and petitioning. He largely dismissed concerns about petitioning as "a non sequitur" and "quibbling" before offering a brief reply that argued that asking government to take a specific action did not mean one was conferring legitimacy upon that institution. Yet Garrison did little to prove that point.[11]

Third, Garrison took aim at Scott's criticism of his leadership of the antislavery movement. Sarcastically describing Scott as "modest," Garrison said Scott's belief that subscribers were afraid to speak against their leader was "a sweeping impeachment of the moral courage of our correspondents, ..." He then criticized Scott's closing call for unity. "Our 'appropriate work' is not only to bear testimony against slavery, but against all iniquity," he replied, underscoring Scott's earlier fears that non-resistance and abolitionism were merging. Where Scott called for keeping the antislavery movement focused on abolitionism, Garrison promoted a far more nuanced position. He felt himself bound by conscience to promote non-

[10] According to Scott's understanding of the principle-policy paradigm, there were distinct "peace" and "non-resistance" principles. This explains why Scott opposed calling the non-resistance convention a peace convention.
[11] "Human Governments.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, 4.

resistance and he found any calls to set aside his divisive opinions as a usurpation of his "understanding and conscience." [12] When an anonymous writer in the *Emancipator*, purportedly a signer of the non-resistance Declaration of Sentiments, worried that non-resistance rhetoric was dividing the antislavery movement, Garrison dismissed him as "weak and inconclusive" before assuring readers, "All's well!"[13]

All, however, was not well in the antislavery ranks. Scott and the anonymous *Emancipator* correspondent were both partly correct that a discussion of non-resistance would fracture the movement. However, by seeking to prevent a discussion they feared would divide abolitionists, they helped seal the fate that they were so desperate to avoid. Essentially, Scott came to fear that the non-resistance content on page four of the *Liberator* would influence, shape, and characterize the three pages which preceded it. This study is not intended to relitigate the fragmentation of the antislavery movement from 1838 through 1840. Instead, it examines Orange Scott's limited role in that split by exploring how he refined his worldview and adapted it to the question of non-resistance. His overarching worldview was defined by his opposition to what he saw as three major errors: Universalism, slavery, and non-resistance. Each of these deprived humans of their agency and stood as impediments in the implementation of a Christian worldview. From 1838 through 1840, he adopted two views that made continued cooperation with the Garrisonians an increasingly untenable proposition: he supported antislavery politics as the capstone to abolitionist moral suasion and rejected Garrison as the leader of the antislavery movement. And as one of the most important abolition Methodists, Scott did play an important albeit limited role in the larger division. His polemical stance against non-resistance, however,

[12] "Human Governments.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, 4.
[13] "Non-Resistance Society.," *Liberator*, November 16, 1838, vol. 8, no. 46, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

alienated him from many of his antislavery allies. But even as Garrison remained more popular, Scott still retained his share of supporters. "I suppose you think Orange Scott in great delusion," Angelina Ammidon Howe told Anne Warren Weston of the emerging rift in November 1838, "but I must confess it seemed to me nearer right than Garrison."[14]

Scott carried his support for antislavery politics from word to deed very quickly and very aggressively. In October and November 1838, he attended a series of conventions and promulgated his brand of moral reform and political action. On October 17 and 18, he attended the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society at Framingham. During that time, he was elected one of the society's eight councilors and served on its seven-person business committee. Although not the sole author of the society's resolutions, the resolutions were heavily political and based upon the premise that America was "a religious, as well as a republican nation,...."[15] Less than a month later, Rev. Amos A. Phelps, an ally of Scott's, helped draft and pass a resolution at the Norfolk County Anti-Slavery Society that created an identical dichotomy between antislavery activities "as Christians" and "as good citizens."[16]

In early November, Scott traveled to Pittsburgh to attend an antislavery convention for abolitionists in the western part of the state. At the time, Scott hailed this convention as a tremendous success that had resulted in the creation of a new antislavery society and the raising of thousands of dollars. It also underscores his conception of antislavery unity and his populist

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[14] Angelina Ammidon Howe, "Angelina Ammidon [Howe] to Anne Warren Weston, Nov 1838," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive (accessed April 27, 2021).
[15] "Annual Meeting of the Middlesex Co. Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, November 23, 1838, vol. 8, no. 47, p. 2. Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Rev. John Parker, Scott's fellow Methodist minister at Lowell from 1836-1837, opened the meeting with prayer. The resolutions called on abolitionists "in no case to abstain from voting, merely because they cannot conscientiously throw their votes for either of the regularly nominated candidates; but to see to it that each individual cast his vote for some true friend of the slave – otherwise his whole influence on the politics of the country is lost." Although it urged voting, it also made this request contingent on the antislavery credentials of prospective candidates.
[16] "Third Quarterly Meeting of the Norfolk County Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, November 23, 1838, vol. 8, no. 47, p. 2. Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

inclinations. In a letter about the convention to Joshua Leavitt of the *Emancipator*, he touted that the "hardy yeomanry" were "well represented" as were "Farmers, mechanics, doctors and clergymen" of different religious backgrounds. The strongest opposition, Scott lamented, came from within his own church.[17] During that time, Scott reportedly took an active role in encouraging political action, and his activities eventually sparked a controversy in the *Liberator*.[18]

After the Pittsburgh Convention, Scott turned his attention to his home in Lowell, which hosted a Methodist antislavery convention on November 21 and 22. While the logistics of this convention were overseen by Edward A. Rice, a bookstore owner in Lowell, both Scott and Luther Lee played a pivotal role in the convention itself. On the evening before the Lowell

[17] O. Scott, "Western Pennsylvania Awake.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 17, 1838, vol. 3, no. 46, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott recounted his experience with the preacher in charge of the Smithfield Street Church in Pittsburgh, who had allegedly told him that he could preach at his church only to change his mind. A. Brown, Jr., a correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Christian Witness*, ran into this minister, "Rev. Mr. Babcock". Brown had been reading a Scott article from the *Emancipator* and set it down on the table, which Babcock then read with "deep displeasure." Afterwards, Brown and Babcock engaged in a debate about Scott, which culminated with Babcock saying, "O. Scott is the greatest liar this side of Purgatory." Brown recounted that Babcock went so far into their debate to claim that John Wesley had never criticized slavery. This article, which touted that Scott had boldly "opened his mouth for the dumb," was republished in the *Liberator*. Garrison openly defended Scott, noting that Babcock's claims were "libelous charges" before declaring that "We are inclined to think that the reputation of our bro. Scott will survive this Sirocco blast." See A. Brown, Jr., "From the Pittsburgh Christian Witness.," and "Untitled.," *Liberator*, December 21, 1838, vol. 8, no. 51, p. 1 and 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[18] For an account of the argument between H.C. Howells and W.H. Burleigh over Scott's conduct, see H.C. H., "The Anti-Slavery Divisions.," *Liberator*, May 5, 1840, vol. 10, no. 20, p. 1; W.H. Burleigh, "Reply to 'H.C.H.'," Liberator, vol. 10, no. 23, p. 1; H.C. Howells., "Letter from H.C. Howells.," *Liberator*, July 3, 1840, vol. 10, no. 27, p. 1; W.H. Burleigh, "Reply to H.C. Howells.," *Liberator*, August 7, 1840, vol. 10, no. 32, p. 2; and H.C. Howells, "Reply to W.H. Burleigh.," *Liberator*, September 4, 1840, vol. 10, no. 36, p. 2 Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). This controversy stemmed from Howells' claim that Scott had used his position as an antislavery agent to oppose non-resistance during the convention. Burleigh defended Scott, claiming Scott had said no more than a dozen words inside or outside the committee meetings. Howells' counter narrative offers insight into Scott's influence because he argued that Scott's voice alone was enough to sway the committee one way or the other. "I must believe that if O. Scott had taken an opposite course, the momentous clause would never have been rejected," Howells wrote. He also qualified his criticisms of Scott, writing, "I love him [Scott] as a noble and intrepid advocate of God's poor." Burleigh, however, considered Howells' article an "injustice" because Scott had not even taken an interest in the non-resistance issue at that time. Burleigh's account would align chronologically with Scott's public record, as Scott became aggressive against non-resistance only after the Boston Peace Convention in September 1838, spurred by fears that Garrison had embraced its principles. In his final letter, Howells had been relegated to saying his attacks on Scott were simply his expressing "an opinion."

Convention, the two delivered lectures on slavery that La Roy Sunderland described together as "an able and interesting discourse." The ministers then opened the convention on November 20 at 9am with a public prayer meeting before Timothy Merritt and Jotham Horton inaugurated the proceedings at 10am. Like Lynn and Utica, the Lowell Convention was composed of ministers and lay members. Scott played a limited but significant role in the convention and was chosen to serve on the business committee. It is also important to observe that the convention, composed almost entirely of New Englanders, included a noteworthy guest from Philadelphia: Lucius C. Matlack, the young abolition Methodist from Pennsylvania.[19] In the aftermath of the convention, the Philadelphia Conference stripped Matlack of his license to preach on account of his antislavery activities.[20]

The resolutions, however, are worthy of a closer examination. Of the thirty-one resolutions, ten dealt explicitly with questions of church government in the form of the Pacification Plan, the power of bishops, and a burgeoning controversy over the power of presiding elders.[21] Most resolutions dealt with general abolition matters, but two stand out as being connected to the debate with Garrison. The resolutions – although not written by Scott

[19] "Lowell Convention.," and "Notice.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 17, 1838, vol. 3, no. 46, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Matlack served as one of three secretaries.
[20] For an initial account of Matlack's suspension and La Roy Sunderland's reaction, see "More Proscription!", *Zion's Watchman*, January 12, 1839, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery (accessed April 12, 2022).
[21] "The Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, December 1, 1838, vol. 3, no. 48, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). During the 1838-1839 conference year, another controversy over church government emerged. Where previous clashes had been between annual conferences and bishops, this new dispute pitted quarterly meetings against their presiding elders. This increasingly became a source of contention during the fall of 1839. Presiding elders were chosen by anti-abolition bishops and generally had anti-abolition views well outside the mainstream of their districts. See John M. Doane, "Quarterly Conference Meeting at Duxbury.," *Zion's Herald*, October 31, 1838, vol. 9, no. 44, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed August 10, 2022). In this case, Presiding Elder Bartholomew Otheman refused to allow resolutions on slavery to be passed and, when abolition Methodists Seth Sprague and Hiram Cummings continued to create problems, Otheman simply left with church business unfinished. Abolition Methodists deemed it a usurpation of their rights. Cummings described Otheman's conduct as "contrary to the discipline" and feared it was "dangerous as a precedent...." The Lowell Convention highlighted the Duxbury Methodists as one example of those who adopted a "manly course" against the "usurpations" of the presiding elders.

alone – called for political action and endorsed female participation in the antislavery movement. With respect to the former, the Lowell Convention endorsed antislavery politics with historical precedent in America and the example of British abolitionists. In a nearly identical resolution to the one adopted at the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society, the Lowell Convention resolved to vote for those "who will identify themselves with the cause of bleeding humanity, ... and we earnestly recommend all our brethren and friends through the land do the same." The Lowell Convention also illustrated the complementarian view of gender that Scott had articulated in his debate with Garrison, believing that "women's influence is indispensable to the final success of every holy cause" and they endorsed "the formation of Female Abolition Societies."[22] Like the Lynn and Utica conventions, Scott envisioned the Lowell Convention helping galvanize abolition Methodists and pressuring the church to take a stronger stance against slavery. The convention also embodied the dual nature of Scott's abolitionism that had increasingly become a source of contention within the larger antislavery movement: commitment to moral suasion *and* support for political action.[23] Advocating the latter, then, did not mean abandoning the former.

Scott closed the year in Lowell and penned one of the most important articles in his debate with the Garrisonians. He endorsed a recent proposition by Gerrit Smith to reorganize the antislavery movement. In sum, Smith's proposal called for the creation of new antislavery

[22] "Lowell Convention.," and "Notice.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 17, 1838, vol. 3, no. 46, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). The Address to the Methodist Episcopal Church, drafted by a committee composed of Joseph A. Merrill, Seth Sprague, and La Roy Sunderland further echoed these ideas and indicate that Scott's views were shared by a larger community of abolition Methodists. The committee similarly declared that abolitionists should vote, but only vote for genuine abolitionists and not allow partisanship to influence their vote behavior.
[23] O. Scott, "Western Pennsylvania Awake.," *Zion's Watchman*, November 17, 1838, vol. 3, no. 46, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). As Scott told Leavitt, "The design of these conventions, and of Methodist Anti-Slavery Societies, is to exert an influence on the church, and co-operate with the A.S.S, and its auxiliaries, in removing slavery from the land."

organizations with an eye toward creating an abolitionist voting bloc in New York.[24] Scott's endorsement of political action, however, also came with a rebuke of those abolitionists who had voted against their principles. This embodies Scott's oft contradictory and sometimes ambiguous position on voting. While Garrison's fears that Scott ultimately wanted non-resistant abolitionists to vote were not without merit, Scott initially placed a priority on enforcing principled voting among politically attuned abolitionists. This message, however, was somewhat muddled by his transition from claiming to only need "half our present members" to speaking more generally of "all who profess to be abolitionists."[25] Nevertheless, Scott's plan did not require Garrisonian votes because it rested on the premise that "it takes but a few votes to turn the scale in favor of human rights."[26] In the same way Smith prioritized "quality" over "quantity," Scott likened this group of principled antislavery voters to Gideon's army and claimed three hundred principled abolitionists would be more influential than thirty thousand unprincipled antislavery voters.[27]

Scott saw the Second Party System – the period of political struggle between the Whigs and the Democrats – as the greatest obstacle to a viable antislavery politics. Abolitionists, he argued, needed to vote "free from party trammels." He made his frustrations explicit, observing:

> How hard it is for a *democrat* to vote for a whig, however spotless his character, and however sound his principles on the subject of human rights – and *vice versa*. Our friends, however, are beginning to see that the temple is greatest than the gold that is on

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[24] Gerrit Smith, "On Political Action.," *Liberator*, December 21, 1838, vol. 8, no. 51, p. 1, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 22, 2022). Garrison considered Smith's plan an "earnest and eloquent" reflection of "his views." He praised Smith's desire to redress problems with the New York wing of the movement but felt "the proposed alteration will not remedy the evil."

[25] On one hand, Scott said they only needed "Half our present members," yet a few sentences later seemingly spoke more generally about "all who profess to be abolitionists,..." However, the context of this was in reference to those "who give the lie to their professions when they go to the polls," suggesting that Scott was only referencing voting abolitionists.

[26] O. Scott, "Gerrit Smith's Proposal.," *Liberator*, January 4, 1839, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 22, 2022).

[27] Gerrit Smith, "On Political Action.," *Liberator*, December 21, 1838, vol. 8, no. 51, p. 1, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 22, 2022). O. Scott, "Gerrit Smith's Proposal.," *Liberator*, January 4, 1838, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 22, 2022).

> it; or in other words, that the *tariff*, *national bank*, and *sub-treasury*, are infinitely inferior to the great subject of human rights, which lies at the foundation of all other questions.[28]

Scott's object was to liberate a latent antislavery electorate from the thralldom of the two major parties, neither of which opposed slavery.[29] This statement encapsulated much of Scott's worldview. It exemplifies the dichotomy between principle and policy. Scott drew a stark contrast between moral principle and economic policy, arguing that abolitionists should prioritize the former before even considering the latter. Principles such as human rights were always imbued with a moral and religious dimension and were far more important than any one policy. Voters, he reasoned, should prioritize a candidate's principles before considering secondary issues. An antislavery Whig, in his view, should vote for an antislavery Democratic candidate even if the candidate supported different economic measures because the issue they shared – human rights – trumped all extraneous policy considerations.

The imagery of the temple and the gold that decorated it further serves as a metaphor for principle and policy. Principles were the temple. The implications of this comparison are significant. The temple existed to bring people closer to God and was integral in the relationship between God and humanity. First principles, derived and shaped by the conscience, played a similar role. For Scott, principles like human rights could not be separated from their innately religious context. By contrast, policies were merely the gold ornamentation upon that edifice. Those decorations did not inherently make the temple sacred or significant. They simply beautified it, serving as an external and tangible manifestation of more ethereal concepts. In the context of this metaphor, policies only had worth insofar as they advanced principle. By echoing

[28] Scott, "Gerrit Smith's Proposal.," 2.
[29] Scott, "Gerrit Smith's Proposal.," 2.

this metaphor, Scott's broadside against the two major parties illustrates his belief that voters had sacrificed sacred principle at the altar of preferred policy.

Scott's indictment of the Second Party System, however, was shaped by pragmatic considerations and straddled into the realm of promoting a third party. He postulated that the reason abolitionists had failed to win political power was because antislavery voters were divided in membership between two political organizations over petty differences. Using Lowell as an example, Scott cited the 1838 midterms. There were approximately 300 abolitionist voters in Lowell, with 200 of them voting for the Whig, 70 voting for the Democrat, and only 30 voters – or 10% of the antislavery electorate – voting without regard to party. The 200 abolitionists voted for "abolition *whig* principles" and the 70 others voted for "abolition *democratic* principles." Scott's choice of wording is crucial, because it underscores his belief that abolitionist partisans were elevating their policy preferences and institutional party loyalty above principle. By identifying them by their party label and listing abolition as a mere adjective, Scott framed those Whigs and Democrats as partisans first and abolitionists second. His solution, however, was simple: antislavery voters should vote Whig if the Whig was an abolitionist, vote Democratic if the Democrat was an abolitionist, or vote third party if neither candidate opposed slavery. "The abolitionists had three tickets, whereas they should have had but *one*," he lamented of the situation in Lowell, "i.e. providing the candidates on either side were right, or providing enough could be found on both side to make one ticket complete, of good men and true."[30]

This article demonstrates Scott's belief in the primacy of principle over policy as well as the interconnectedness of moral agitation and political action. "I have my preferences in relation to other political questions," he told Garrison, "but this shall control all other considerations, in

[30] Scott, "Gerrit Smith's Proposal.," 2. Scott also spoke of a "union ticket which was purely abolition," underscoring his belief in the potential for a third party.

giving my suffrages at the polls." Likely anticipating the non-resistance counterattack, Scott clarified that his support for antislavery politics did not mean he had turned "a *moral question*" into something "*political*." Instead, as seen in his debates with anti-abolition Methodists, Scott argued that slavery was a moral issue with a political dimension. He again reiterated that belief. "We have never denied that this question had its political bearings," he wrote, arguing that calls for political action did not negate the underlying "*moral character*" of an issue. However, Scott went further and implicitly suggested that voting may be a duty for abolitionists. He closed his communication with hopes that Gerrit Smith's plan would lead to the creation of "one great uniform and consistent anti-slavery building."[31]

The year 1839 began with a controversy between supporters of La Roy Sunderland's *Zion's Watchman* and the *Zion's Herald* over the Lowell Convention. During the convention, two resolutions had been adopted which endorsed the *Zion's Watchman* and called for abolition Methodists to subscribe to it. David H. Ela, the publisher of the *Herald*, wrote to Sunderland to complain about this and then requested his letter be made public. Ela argued that the *Herald* was "the first Methodist periodical which spoke out against slavery" and, as a result, deserved "its due" from abolition Methodists.[32] Sunderland, however, was unpersuaded and closed his reply to Ela by echoing Orange Scott's earlier critique that the *Herald* under William C. Brown was no longer sufficiently interested in free discussion.[33]

Scott penned a reply to Ela the following day. Prefacing his remarks by reiterating that he "want[ed] nothing more to do with it [the Herald]," he argued that the principal reason why the

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[31] Scott, "Gerrit Smith's Proposal.," 2. Scott told readers that political action is, at least in some cases, a *moral duty*." Assertions like this make Scott's sentiments on whether non-resistants should vote more ambiguous.
[32] To support his belief that the *Herald* deserved support from the Lowell Convention, Ela cited Orange Scott's endorsement of the paper from January 31, 1838.
[33] "Zion's Herald.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 5, 1839, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

Watchman was superior to the *Herald* was because it was a private Methodist newspaper. Rather than being a conference organ, the *Watchman* had the freedom to be a dedicated antislavery platform. "Brother Ela *knows*, that the editor is not at liberty to advocate the abolition cause," he wrote. Scott, however, did not use the controversy as a means to clash with Ela personally. Rather than blame the *Herald* or Ela, he instead presented a more unifying narrative that cast anti-abolition church authorities as the villains. He quickly pivoted to what he considered the larger issue at stake: that the Methodist Episcopal Church had essentially placed a "gag" on the newspaper. This made it, in Scott's view, the only official Methodist newspaper unable to speak on the issues of slavery and abolition. In much the same way he defended conference rights and the rights of quarterly meetings on a democratic, low-church basis, he again supported freedom of the religious press on the premise that a paper should reflect its readership.[34]

In January and February 1839, Scott penned an exclusive five-part series for the *Zion's Watchman*. This series of articles, entitled "Christianity and Infidelity Compared," marked a return to the religious and evangelical material that had characterized Scott's earlier years in the ministry. These essays illustrated Scott's familiarity with Greek philosophy, the history of the early church, and even the history of the Roman Empire. They further underscore his continued commitment to a traditional Christian theology that treated the Bible as divinely revealed truth. While atheism was one of the central objects of this series, he connected atheism with deism and Universalism as being ideals under the broader tent of "infidelity." The series was an apology for the veracity of Christianity, taking aim at the skeptics in "this age of 'moral philosophers'" and

[34] O. Scott, "Zion's Herald Once More.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 12, 1839, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "As more than three-fourths, perhaps, seven-eighths of its subscribers are abolitionists, it should be decidedly abolition in its editorial character. Its editorial character should be of the character of the Conference officially patronizing it. Nothing is more reasonable than this." As a matter of consistency, Scott also applied this standard to anti-abolition and proslavery conferences.

those denied the authority of the Bible.[35] This series further illustrates Scott's belief that Christianity was a religion with a coherent worldview, and Scott drew a direct connection between religious faith and temporal considerations. Much like the debate with Thomas Whittemore, this theological series inevitably turned to practical questions: namely, how did "Christianity" and "Infidelity" influence those who embraced their competing doctrines?[36] One component of this discussion is worthy of notice because it underscores that Scott did not fundamentally differ significantly from the Garrisonians he had spent the prior months debating. When contrasting Christianity and Judaism, Scott explicitly touted the fact that Christians looked beyond temporal considerations in a manner not too dissimilar from Garrison's "divine government" sentiment. "They [the Jewish people] were expecting a temporal prince," he wrote of the expected messiah, "But the language of Christ was, 'my kingdom is not of this world' – 'in the world ye shall have tribulation.'" Furthermore, he added that "Christ expressly told his disciples, that they had nothing to expect from the world, but persecution and death...."[37] While he defended the legitimacy of humans government, he still tempered this attitude with a Christian confidence in the supremacy of divine law over human institutions.

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[35] "Christianity & Infidelity.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 19, 1839, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

[36] "Christianity and Infidelity Compared.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 5, 1839, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 1; "Christianity and Infidelity Compared.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 12, 1839, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 1; "Christianity and Infidelity Compared.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 19, 1839, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 1; "Christianity and Infidelity Compared.," January 26, 1839, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 1; "Christianity and Infidelity Compared.," *Zion's Watchman*, February 9, 1839, vol. 4, no. 6, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott's article offers an exhaustive look at early church history, citing prominent figures like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Polycarp of Smyrna, Origen, and Jerome. He also referenced figures from Jewish and Roman history, including Josephus, Tacitus, and Emperor Julian the Apostate as well as Greek philosophers and thinkers from Socrates to Pythagoras. Furthermore, he arrayed himself against many Enlightenment-era philosophers such as David Hume, Thomas Hobbes, Lord Bolingbroke, and Voltaire. The first three essays define terms and defend the legitimacy of Christianity from critics past and present. Scott's practical considerations of Christianity and infidelity can be found in the January 26 and February 9 articles, with the former looking at the consequences of infidelity and the latter exploring how Christianity makes its adherents better people.

[37] "Christianity and Infidelity Compared.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 12, 1839, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

The controversy between the Garrisonians and their abolitionist critics exploded in the opening days of 1839. On January 4, 1839, Garrison reached out to Samuel May to inform him that he had learned of what he termed "a conspiracy going on in our midst, to an extent deplorable and alarming." This conspiracy, Garrison warned, was the work of ministers driven by "the old leaven of sectarianism working afresh" with designs to see the *Liberator* destroyed and replaced by "another weekly anti-slavery publication, to be the official organ of the State Society, and to be managed upon 'orthodox' principles." Garrison even named names in the plot. "[Amos A.] Phelps and [Charles T.] Torrey are foremost in the matter," he declared, adding that they were "backed up by" Henry B. Stanton and Alanson St. Clair. Although not listed among the plotters, Garrison confessed that he was "inclined to think" that Orange Scott would join these ministerial conspirators in their plot.[38] In a letter he wrote the next day urging George Benson to attend the annual meeting on January 23, Garrison reaffirmed this view of Scott. He again distinguished Scott from the others but surmised that he would join them "because of his strong dislike of the non-resistance discussion; ...."[39] Garrison then promised Benson he would "sound a note of warning" in the *Liberator* now that "we had 'the cat out of the bag.'"[40]

Garrison kept his word, and publicly attacked this group on January 11. He cast himself as fighting a war on two fronts: one externally against slavery and another internally against this newfangled conspiracy. "There is a deep scheme laid by individuals,..., to put the control of the anti-slavery movements ... into other hands," he warned, adding that, "This scheme, of course, is

[38] William Lloyd Garrison, "William Lloyd Garrison to Samuel May, January 4, 1839," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/lettertobelovedf00garr3 (accessed April 27, 2021).
[39] Garrison listed Stanton on his list of conspirators, but crossed his name out with the sentence afterward saying Stanton would be "prepared to go with them [Phelps, Torrey, and St. Clair]. Garrison also worried that the conspirators intended to "settle the 'woman question' against us."
[40] William Lloyd Garrison, "Letter to George Benson, January 5, 1839," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/lettertomydearge00garr9 (accessed April 27, 2021).

of clerical origin, and the prominent ringleaders fill the clerical office." After explaining their agenda as he understood it, he ended by issuing a call his allies to attend the coming annual meeting that month in order "to baffle the machinations of a clerical combination" who supported an agenda that was "treacherous to humanity."[41] To defend himself and his paper's *de facto* monopoly among New England abolitionists, Garrison turned to anti-clericism. Others followed suit. The following week Oliver Johnson ridiculed "The clerical and sectarian haters of the Liberator," echoing his underlying animosity for some of the more conservative abolitionists that came from evangelical Christian denominations.[42] Garrison himself pressed Johnson's arguments further with personal attacks on Charles T. Torrey. Although Torrey's commitment to abolitionism would ordinarily make him "worthy of all praise," Garrison alleged that Torrey's "bustling zeal and a readiness to labor in the anti-slavery cause" was "subsidiary to sectarian purposes." He cited comments Torrey had made in support of Hubbard Winslow – the architect of the controversial definition of republican liberty – as proof that he could not be trusted. While Torrey had simply defended Winslow's Christian character, Garrison did not distinguish that point from abolitionism. If Winslow was a "wolf in sheep's clothing," then Torrey's measured defense of him as a Christian proved that Torrey was a traitor to the movement. "But is the abolitionism of such a man to be trusted?" Garrison asked readers.[43]

In his polemic against the clerical conspirators like Torrey, Garrison offered a window into the rift between him and his opponents. To Garrison, it was Torrey and the ministers who

[41] "Watchman, What of the Night?," *Liberator*, January 11, 1839, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 23, 2022).
[42] J., "Stories! Stories!!", *Liberator*, January 18, 1839, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 23, 2022).
[43] "Annual Meeting.," *Liberator*, January 18, 1839, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 23, 2022). Garrison cited Torrey's earlier support for creating a specifically evangelical antislavery society before joining the broader movement. To Garrison, Torrey was never a sincere abolitionist. After his original plot had failed, Garrison alleged, "he adroitly disguised the real feelings of his heart, and once more manifested a willingness to labor in our ranks with all apparent loyalty."

were exhibiting a "readiness to divide our ranks...."[44] This illustrates a source of the controversy between Garrison and his evangelical critics like Orange Scott. Garrison largely viewed this plot as occurring in a vacuum. While his private correspondence with May and Benson acknowledged larger problems at stake, nowhere did Garrison offer any introspection. Ministers like Torrey, Phelps, St. Clair, and Scott, however, did not suddenly and randomly decide to oppose Garrison; their actions were driven by a concern over the direction of the *Liberator* and fears that abolitionism and non-resistance would soon be combined. The ultimate blame for the division that occurred should be placed on both sides, but Garrison lacked a crucial degree of introspection that might have helped forestall the schism. Scott's contributions to this internecine struggle were significant because he exposed a crucial incongruity in Garrison's positions on non-resistance and the Torrey-Phelps-St. Clair conspiracy.

Since the onset of the non-resistance debate, Scott had complained that the *Liberator* was inserting extraneous material that was not related to slavery. During that time, Garrison had defended his coverage of issues unrelated to slavery on the basis that it was his paper and not an official organ for the state antislavery society. As a result, he concluded that he was entitled to put whatever content into it that he wanted. While this was true and nobody disagreed with that point, his self-assured insistence that the *Liberator* was his exclusive property in 1838 appears very jarring when juxtaposed next to his panic that critics of his course that year would respond by seeking to establish an official antislavery paper focused exclusively on matters related to slavery and abolition. Garrison may have exposed his ministerial plotters for their "insidious and wicked attempt to subvert the integrity of the abolition enterprise," but his debate with Scott had indirectly revealed that he too had ulterior motives in attacking them.[45]

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[44] "Annual Meeting.," 3.
[45] "Annual Meeting.," 3.

The first evidence that Scott commented on this "conspiracy" or interacted with its members was on January 15, 1839, when he wrote Amos A. Phelps, then a general agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. As Garrison had aptly predicted in his letter to Benson, Scott's support for setting up a new antislavery paper was derived from non-resistance. "If friend Garrison will <u>not exclude</u> from the Liberator the 'no human government theory,' I should be in favor, with my present light, of starting a new paper," he told Phelps.[46] Nevertheless, Scott was pessimistic that Garrison could be defeated and he warned Phelps that the annual society was not the right place to force the issue since "the fact is, a large majority of the abolitionists who will attend the annual meeting are Liberator abolitionists." Although not initially a member of Phelps and Torrey's conspiracy, his letter indicates that he supported them and offered advice to help them more effectively accomplish their goals. Instead of seeking to take control of the Board of Managers and establish a new paper during the annual meeting, Scott stressed patience. Abolitionists would not support what they might see as a usurpation, so he recommended they make a new, affordable paper and let it change public opinion. "Let both papers go <u>on their own responsibility</u> for the year to come," he suggested, "and in the course of the year the abolitionists of Mass. will see that [others] besides Garrison, can make an anti-slavery paper. They will then not be so afraid of the new paper [sic]."[47]

Although he believed that Garrison and had lost his way and he felt individuals like Phelps and Torrey were better equipped to lead the movement, this did not mean he endorsed the plot. Their "forcible means," he worried, threatened "an <u>open-warfare</u> in the anti-slavery ranks." He even reiterated this concern again at the end of his letter. Efforts to force the whole society to

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[46] Although bearish on engaging Garrison directly at the annual meeting, Scott was optimistic that they could enjoy statewide success.

[47] Orange Scott, "Orange Scott, Letter to Amos. A. Phelps, January 15, 1839," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/lettertodearbrot00scot (accessed April 27, 2021).

accept their brand of abolitionism, Scott explained, would pit "one half the abolitionists in Mass. against the other." And he concluded by telling Phelps that "engagements abroad" in Vermont and elsewhere would preclude his attending the state society meeting on January 23.[48] Nevertheless, Scott's advice and his arguments against the *Liberator* became key element of the plot against Garrison.[49] Scott's letter, then, reflected the ways he was caught between two rival factions. While he generally agreed with one side, he also hoped abolitionists could avoid infighting.

Although Scott had warned Phelps that he would not be able to attend the state society meeting, he ultimately attended. During this meeting, Scott sided with Phelps' faction. He motioned to have the convention strike out the portion of the Board of Manager's Annual Report critical of Gerrit Smith's plan for separate antislavery organizations. The Board had concluded that Smith's plan turned a moral issue into a political matter and worried that it would ultimately entail non-resistance abolitionists having to vote against their consciences. Scott's motion to strike that portion of the report out, however, failed by an overwhelming vote of 180-21.[50] This did not mean he had become a pariah. He attended an antislavery meeting at Faneuil Hall during the state society meeting and opened the gathering with prayer.[51] After the meeting, he then

[48] Orange Scott, "Orange Scott, Letter to Amos. A. Phelps, January 15, 1839," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/lettertodearbrot00scot (accessed April 27, 2021).
[49] "Some things in Massachusetts ,and the Annual Meeting.," *Advocate of Freedom*, January 31, 1839, vol. 1, no. 24, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). An editorial in the *Advocate of Freedom* critical of Garrison's allegations of conspiracy not only challenged him by arguing that it was a conspiracy being done out in the open, they further noted three reasons why a new paper would be desirous: the *Liberator's* penchant for extraneous issues like non-resistance alienated potential subscribers, it was too expensive at $2.50 and a $1.00 paper would be more affordable, and the society needed a paper edited by a person who could discuss political action in good conscience. Two of those three were things Scott recommended to Phelps prior to the meeting, and the third was one which he alluded to in his article on Gerrit Smith's proposal.
[50] "Annual Meeting of the State Society.," *Liberator*, February 1, 1839, vol. 9, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022). For the full text of the Gerrit Smith section, see "Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Mass. Anti-Slavery Society." (Boston: Isaac Knapp, No. 25 Cornhill, 1839), p. 24-31, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 6, 2022).
[51] "Meeting in Faneuil Hall.," *Liberator*, February 1, 1839, vol. 9, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022).

spent the next few weeks traveling across New England as an antislavery agent. He first traveled to Leominster, Massachusetts, a town north of Worcester and west of Lowell, and raised $27.50 during his trip.[52] He then set out for Middlebury, Vermont, to deliver a "preliminary discourse" that would commence the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society's fifth annual meeting on February 19.[53] On March 26, he returned to Boston to open the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society quarterly meeting with prayer, where he again voted against the Board of Managers.[54]

Although Scott largely continued in this antislavery work unimpeded by the emerging tensions within the movement, he nevertheless played a role in it. This was a result of his own personal decisions as well as circumstances beyond his control. While Scott personally disliked the course that Garrison had set for the antislavery movement, he nevertheless did not want a confrontation. He had no reservations about strenuously disagreeing with the Garrisonians, or even seeing Garrison replaced as a leader in the movement, but he did not desire an open and irrevocable conflict. He was still, in many respects, a Garrisonian. Circumstances eventually created an environment in which he was forced to choose a side, and he inevitably sided with the faction that better reflected his principles and his policy preferences. On February 4, he wrote a letter to Garrison frustrated with the aftermath of the state society meeting and his belief that the *Liberator* was being mismanaged. In particular, he objected to how the proceedings of the state society characterized his proposal to strike out material related to the Gerrit Smith plan. In doing so, Scott made public some of the private machinations that took place behind-the-scenes related

[52] "Receipts into the Treasury of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, from 26th Jan. to 8th Feb.," *Liberator*, February 22, 1839, vol. 9, no. 8, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott and his fellow state society agents, Ichabod Codding and Henry B. Stanton, raised a total of $812.42 in the year. See, "Address to the Abolitionists of Massachusetts.," *Liberator*, March 1, 1839, vol. 9, no. 9, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022).
[53] "Anti-Slavery Anniversary.," *Liberator*, February 1, 1839, vol. 9, no. 5, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022).
[54] "Quarterly Meeting of the Mass. A.S. Society.," *Liberator*, March 29, 1839, vol. 9, no. 13, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022).

to the so-called "plot" against the *Liberator*. In part, Scott claimed that he had personally written Garrison before the meeting about a potential compromise that could have resulted in "a small weekly anti-slavery paper" managed by "individuals" and "on friendly terms with the Liberator."[55] That paper would not have, as Phelps and St. Clair desired, been endorsed by the state society. In that sense, Scott wanted to find a common ground between these rival factions that would forestall any potential infighting. He further objected to what he viewed as false allegations that he was "among the 'plotters,'" telling Garrison, "If I am a 'plotter,' I know not but I shall bring you in as a *partner*."[56]

The remaining portion of Scott's letter to Garrison, however, reaffirmed his support for Gerrit Smith's plan and called on not only one, "but *many* new organizations." Those organizations were only a necessity because the leaders of the movement – Garrison included – could not lead abolitionists into the political realm. While Scott believed abolitionists could hold differing opinions, he felt "the more disconnected such sentiments are with abolitionism, the better."[57] Essentially, non-resistance abolitionists could not manage the antislavery movement because their application of principle had led them to reject an entire theater in the struggle for emancipation. Nevertheless, Scott argued that new antislavery organizations did not mean a complete separation, proclaiming that he would still subscribe to the *Liberator* even "if ten thousand other papers are established." Although some of its material sought "to prove that the 'moon is made of green cheese,'" Scott felt that "three quarters" of it was still worth the price of

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[5] Scott's depiction of this paper in the *Liberator* is almost identical to what he told Phelps on January 15. It should be noted that Garrison, in his notes on Scott's article, did not contest this fact.

[56] O. Scott, "Plotters – Explanations – Political Action, &c.," *Liberator*, February 8, 1839, vol. 9, no. 6, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022). Based on the timeline of available data, it is unlikely Orange Scott was directly working with Amos Phelps and Alanson St. Clair in 1838 on their plan for a new paper, and, when he became aware of it, he instead sought to ameliorate the situation between Garrison and his opponents by having them set up complimentary antislavery papers.

[57] Scott also cited Daniel Webster's view that human politics was "the science of government."

a subscription.[58] Most notably, however, Scott signed his letter with a revealing but foreboding valediction: "Yours, for Garrison and the Liberator, *as they were....*"[59]

Scott's closing words reveal an important component of the debate that cannot be overlooked. To Scott, the William Lloyd Garrison of 1838-1839 was a fundamentally different person from the William Lloyd Garrison of 1833-1834. This juxtaposition parallels Scott's comparisons of 1830s Methodism and 1790s Methodism. By championing Garrisonianism as it once was, Scott essentially made the argument that he understood and represented true, primitive Garrisonianism better than Garrison himself. Although Scott principally objected to the simple inclusion of non-resistance material in the *Liberator*, this letter reveals the ways this was only a proximate cause in their rift. His ultimate concern rested on the quarter of non-resistance material in the paper that he feared would permeate and shape the "three quarters" of it committed to abolitionism. Believing non-resistance to be antithetical to the antislavery movement, he feared the new Garrison would reverse engineer the old Garrisonian abolitionism and make it conform to his new non-resistance principles and policies.

Scott's letter did not endear himself to Garrison, who subsequently mocked his unwillingness to read non-resistance material and sarcastically emphasized to readers that his article came from "a minister of the gospel of peace!!" Garrison once again likened Scott to slaveholders, justifying the comparison by claiming that Scott opposed the discussion of issues he did not like. He then highlighted what he considered to be Scott's self-righteous temperament. "He is sure that he is right," Garrison wrote of Scott, "he knows that he cannot be wrong – and

[58] Scott, however, warned Garrison, "When the no human government theory shall become the leading topic of the Liberator, I may wish to be off. I will, however, not be so bigoted as to say that all the abolitionists in Massachusetts shall have the Liberator, or go out of the State for a paper, though I am disposed to take it myself."
[59] Scott, "Plotters – Explanations – Political Action, &c.," 2.

that is the end of the matter!"[60] In the same way Scott's views on non-resistance had hardened into obduracy, many Garrison-aligned abolitionists increasingly saw Scott as an enemy rather than an ally in the months that followed. This did not always appear as resentment. None encapsulated the disappointment some felt better than Lucretia Lawrence, an abolitionist from Salem. "Our hearts have been wounded again by reading a letter in the Liberator from Rev. Orange Scott," she lamented in a letter to Garrison, adding that she felt distressed that "our dear brother – one of the persecuted party – [had] assume[d] the spirit of his persecutors and become guilty of the very acts of injustice he had so loudly exclaimed against; ...."[61]

Scott made few friends as he continued to align himself more closely with Amos A. Phelps, Alanson St. Clair, Henry B. Stanton, and their allies. A few weeks later, he again wrote to Garrison to defend James G. Birney from charges that he wanted to excommunicate abolitionists who refused to vote. As late as March and early April 1839, Scott still hoped to avoid open conflict with Garrison even as he distanced himself from the Garrisonians. Scott's defense of Birney, however, also reveals the ways in which he had come to regard his debate with Garrison as a matter of principle. "I did not understand him [Birney] to say, that those who could not go to the polls should leave the society," he wrote, "but I did understand him to say the *opposite*."[62] Birney, as explained by Scott, believed that those who *could* vote *should* vote and those who *could not* do so *did not* need to vote. That aligned with Scott's view of conscience with respect to principle and policy. If conscience led people to apply their principles in a certain way, that needed to be respected. However, Scott's views with respect to this paradigm became

[60] Scott, "Plotters – Explanations – Political Action, &c.," 2.
[61] Lucretia Lawrence, "Esteemed Friend,.," *Liberator*, March 1, 1839, vol. 9, no. 9, p. 1-2, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 25, 2022).
[62] O. Scott, "J.G. Birney – Politics – No Human Government.," *Liberator*, April 5, 1839, vol. 9, no. 14, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

increasingly less flexible because he came to regard conscience not merely as a right but also as a duty.

Scott quickly pivoted from explaining Birney's views to again reiterating his belief that Garrison had fundamentally changed. In the same way he had sought to show that his brand of Methodism was the pure or "primitive" form, he employed a similar argument with respect to Garrisonianism. Citing older quotes from the society and Garrison himself that encouraged political action, he observed that Garrison was the one attacking Birney and Stanton over their adherence to the "fundamental principles of abolitionism!" Scott noted:

> We have all along held that abolitionists were under an '*obligation'* to use both their 'moral and political power' to accomplish this object. Under these provisions we became members of anti-slavery societies. To abandon '*political* action' is, therefore, as REAL a departure from the fundamental principles of abolitionism, as it would be to abandon 'moral action.' The doctrine that it is wrong to go to the polls is, among abolitionists, just as old as the 'no government theory,' which was born about the 20th of September last, though it 'cast its shadows before.'[63]

Garrison, Scott argued, had originally supported political measures until he embraced "present *no government notions*." He, not Birney, had been the one to change.

Much of this tension revolved around questions of what constituted principle, what constituted policy, and where conscience fit into that equation. For Scott, antislavery principles could only be realized through moral action *and* political participation. Moreover, he believed the original antislavery compacts required members to do both. Rather than being a mere policy proscription derived from principle, a refusal to vote was contrary to the correct application of antislavery principles that abolitionists had already agreed upon. Being members of existing antislavery organizations, then, made voting "*our DUTY*" as members of those organizations. Furthermore, Scott's Wheel of Reform acknowledged the need for government, and therefore the

[63] Scott, "J.G. Birney – Politics – No Human Government.," 2.

Garrisonian rejection of government repudiated his entire worldview. Scott, however, carried these assertions further. He understood conscience as a duty to act rather than a right to abstain. "Is the law of God mutable? Can we avoid all responsibility by the plea of conscientious scruples?" he asked Garrison. This assertion rested on the premise that conscience was not an absolute or flawless conduit of principle or moral good. "One man's conscience may not let him pray – another's conscience may prohibit his observing the Sabbath," he wrote, adding that "Some men's consciences teach them that they have no need of the Bible – that its place is supplied by immediate revelations."[64] Conscience, then, was an important right that needed to be respected; but, in Scott's view, it's worth was linked to the principles it advocated and the policies it promoted. It was a moral guide, but it was not infallible.

For Scott, adherence to principle was always paramount even over obedience to conscience, and he increasingly adopted a view that these principles had a clear, objective, and indisputable application. This left far less nuance or flexibility in the principle-policy paradigm because the correct application was the Orange Scott application. Scott, however, argued that he derived his views from Garrisonianism because he believed that holding people accountable to a single moral standard was the fundamentally Garrisonian position. "Whether you feel it to be so, or not, does not alter the facts in the case," he wrote, adding that, "We are to be judged, not by our feelings, but by the eternal rule of right."[65] This led him to tell Garrison that he was willing

[64] Scott, "J.G. Birney – Politics – No Human Government.," 2. Scott again likened Garrison's premise to Mormonism, and for the first time made a comparison between Garrison and the proslavery side. "The slaveholder has them [conscientious scruples], as well as you."

[65] "The fact is, there are certain great principles, binding alike upon all men, the plea of conscience to the contrary notwithstanding. You have censured anti-abolition ministers and Christians, and most justly, for refusing to take sides with God's suffering poor, when they might, in many instances, undoubtedly, have plead conscientious scruples for not identifying themselves with you, ..." Scott further reinforced this attitude that all abolitionists should vote by telling Garrison, "what is my duty, in this respect, is your duty." Scott, however, felt that his views on these questions were the authentic Garrisonian ones and he concluded that, "This is the doctrine you preach to slaveholders and anti-abolitionists," he wrote, "and by it you must stand or fail."

to “go further” than Gerrit Smith and the other critics of non-resistance because he had “not go[ne] further than pure *unmixed abolitionism* has gone from the beginning.”[66]

Scott again reiterated his belief that he was the avatar of old abolitionism and Garrisonianism at the end of his letter. “I esteem and love you still,” he told Garrison but qualified that affection with an ominous proclamation that “I love the *cause too*.” While they could stand together against slavery, he declared, “NEVER!” when faced with the prospect of participating in a movement against “all political action, as well as all human governments.” His loyalty, therefore, was not to a person or an association, but to what he termed “the best method of building up the anti-slavery cause on its first principles; whether it be by new organizations, or otherwise.”[67] And just like his prior valediction, he concluded his letter with the words, “Yours for the abolitionism of 1833-4.” As we have seen, Scott increasingly positioned himself as the real heir to true Garrisonianism. Garrison, deeming Scott’s letter “extremely baneful in its spirit,” offered him “a pedestal upon which to stand,” thinking that his views would hurt him in “the public eye.”[68] Nevertheless, Scott was still an old Garrisonian in principle even if the two men differed dramatically on questions of non-resistance, women’s rights, or organized religion. And even when they were at odds, Scott did not fundamentally disagree with Garrison; he believed peace preferable to war, that women had God-given rights, and that established churches were corrupt. The entire argument, then, stemmed from Scott’s concerns that Garrison had taken good ideals in an erroneous direction and traded unchanging principles for novel ones. Whether or not Scott’s view that he was the true Garrisonian was accurate, he characterized himself in that way.

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[66] Scott, “J.G. Birney – Politics – No Human Government.,” 2. Scott again made his views on political action as a duty explicit. “It is the moral duty of abolitionists to vote right WHEN they go to the polls, but that it is equally their duty TO GO there, and use their political power for the overthrow of slavery; ....”
[67] O. Scott, “J.G. Birney – Politics – No Human Government.,” *Liberator*, April 5, 1839, vol. 9, no. 14, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[68] Scott, “J.G. Birney – Politics – No Human Government.,” 2.

This framing carried an element of truth in it because Scott's worldview embodied elements of William Lloyd Garrison and Gerrit Smith.

Scott may not have been involved in Phelps and St. Clair's plan to start a new antislavery paper, but he increasingly came to support replacing Garrison as a leader in movement. His debate with Garrison then transitioned to a second phase, moving from trying to persuade Garrison towards checking his influence. This initially took the form of appealing to other abolitionists. Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, the editor of the *Herald of Freedom*, was one of the first targets of Scott's new strategy. Writing to Rogers in the spring, Scott took his reservations about Garrison's leadership before the public. On March 29, he wrote a letter for the *Herald of Freedom* hoping to win Rogers over to his side in the controversy. In doing so, he promoted many of the views he had articulated in his defense of Birney with even greater clarity. This article, then, provides further insight into Scott's views of abolition principle, antislavery unity, and why non-resistance made cooperation impossible.

Scott did not condemn William Lloyd Garrison the abolitionist. "The *abolitionism* of the Liberator, as to its *moral bearings*, is of the right stamp – high-toned and thorough, and should be defended by all friends of truth and righteousness," he told Rogers but qualified that praise with the statement, "But farther than this our obligations, as abolitionists do not extend."[69] This did not, however, mean abolitionists needed to debate every minute policy difference. For example, Scott observed that he and Garrison disagreed on how one should regard the Sabbath, but informed Rogers that their different views did not trouble him. This rested on what he revealed to be his fundamental standard for unity: how did one's policies help or hinder "the cause of abolition"? The standard for determining the answer to that question rested on whether

[69] Scott said that he could not allow "considerations of personal friendship" to prevent him from observing that "Error is error."

the matters of disagreement where what he termed "a small matter." Scott's use of Garrison's objection to the Christian Ministry is an illustrative example. While Scott felt Garrison carried his complaints of the ministry too far, he felt Garrison's complaints were still rooted in antislavery principle because the ministry had, by action and inaction, helped to protect slavery. He too decried those "'dumb dogs' in the ministry that 'cannot bark'" and praised Garrison for acting on his antislavery "duty" when attacking anti-abolition and proslavery ministers.[70] This distinction is crucial. Scott felt abolitionists could overlook substantial differences if they acted together in support of their shared principles.

This same concept explains why he found Garrison's views on human government to be a "different ground." At best, non-resistance and abolition worked at cross purposes. Yet Scott saw non-resistance as a greater threat because it undermined the entire antislavery movement. Moreover, Scott worried Rogers' effort to circumvent the debate over Garrisonian non-resistance did a disservice to the *Herald's* readership. "If you are with *friend* Garrison, let us know it," he wrote, "and if you are opposed to him, speak out like N.P. Rogers." Given Scott's belief that non-resistance would be "a strange sound" from the *Herald*, he urged Rogers to take his side. If Garrison was wrong on non-resistance and voting, Scott observed, "we ought to oppose him, not *indirectly*, in *whispers*, but in thunder tones." Although Scott insisted that he still felt "love and respect" for Garrison and admiration for the "gigantic pen" he wielded against slavery, he reiterated his belief that Garrison should not be rge leader of the antislavery movement. "That he has departed, in part, from the principles of primitive abolitionism, cannot, and should not be

[70] O. Scott, "From the Herald of Freedom. The 'No Human Government Theory.," *Liberator*, April 19, 1839, vol. 9, no. 16, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

disguised," he concluded, adding that "it pains me exceedingly to make this charge." The predicament ultimately boiled down to a simple question: "is he [Garrison] a *safe leader*?"[71]

Scott's question also raises another important concern that factors into his thinking during the debate with Garrison. Since he saw the Garrison of 1838-1839 and the Garrison of 1833-1834 as fundamentally different, he feared the implications of that change. He worried that Garrisonianism was shifting from the timeless standard of principled abolition into the ever-changing whims of a mercurial individual. "What guarantee have we that the man who will now go against 'all existing *civil, political, and ecclesiastical institutions*' will no to-morrow go against all anti-slavery organizations?" he asked. Scott's use of the phrase "other revelations" in reference to the modern Garrisonianism that he assailed is revealing because it underscores his belief in abolitionism as an unchanging standard of moral principle.[72] As we have seen, he believed a direct line could be drawn from the abolitionism of a John Wesley to the abolitionism of a William Lloyd Garrison. As such, there was no room or place for novel ideas because the original principles were already perfect.

Two other elements from this letter are important. First, Scott blamed Henry C. Wright as the chief culprit behind Garrison's transformation. Second, Scott underscored the ways in which he saw himself as fundamentally Garrisonian. He admitted that he concurred with Garrison's frustrations with Christian ministers, and even added peace and non-resistance to the issues they agreed on. The problem, then, was Scott's concern that Garrison had erred in his understanding of good principles. "But mark well; whoever shall say that I hate peace and non-resistance in the common acceptation of those terms, will state that which is false," he told Rogers. This gives

[71] Scott, "From the Herald of Freedom. The 'No Human Government Theory.," 4. According to Scott, he seriously began to entertain these reservations about Garrison's leadership in January 1839.
[72] Scott, "From the Herald of Freedom. The 'No Human Government Theory.," 4.

further context to Scott's opposition to Garrisonian non-resistance.[73] It not only hampered abolitionism; it took what should be the laudable cause of peace and corrupted it.

Scott's letter was not well-received, either by the Garrisonians or Rogers himself. It was "a long communication ..., 'full of sound and violence,' but 'signifying nothing,'" Garrison observed.[74] Wright penned a lengthy open letter to Scott that was eventually published a month later in the *Liberator*.[75] Rogers, while he strongly disagreed with Scott's course of action, nevertheless kept his critiques more measured. He wanted to bridge the gap between the two men and therefore tempered his criticisms of Scott. "This anti-slavery champion takes us, ..., by the editorial collar without mittens," he observed, adding that, "Brother Scott has a rough hand of his own, but its grip is friendly. It has no claws at the extremities." Rogers believed in the more moderate standard of principle, policy, and conscience that others like Birney and Gerrit Smith had articulated. If an abolitionist could not in good conscience vote, they did not need to do so. He then challenged Scott's argument that primitive abolitionism had required the political action of voting. He further justified Garrison's refusal to vote, claiming that "he says [that] as a non-resistant, not as an abolitionist." Rogers, in essence, tried to explain Garrison to Scott and reassure Scott that Garrison's views did not threaten abolitionists who wanted political action.[76]

Rogers' quasi-apology of modern Garrisonianism also challenged Scott's "other revelations" complaint. "This abolitionizing has a prodigious influence on the moral vision," he explained of the process by which abolitionism could "enlarge the moral horizon." Rogers

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[73] Scott, "From the Herald of Freedom. The 'No Human Government Theory.," 4.
[74] "Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, April 12, 1839, vol. 9, no. 15, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[75] H.C. Wright, "TO ORANGE SCOTT. – Non-Resistance.," *Liberator*, May 24, 1839, vol. 9, no. 21, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[76] "ORANGE SCOTT.," *Liberator*, April 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 17, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Rogers told Scott that "he [Garrison] says to all voting abolitionists (and they are the mass) go and vote for the slave, ..."

carried this perspective further to explain how he understood antislavery unity. Where Scott filtered an issue by evaluating how it affected the antislavery movement, Rogers took a far more liberal approach. For him, whether an issue aligned with abolitionism was irrelevant so long as abolitionists shared the same goals. This explains his repeated distinction between Garrison the abolitionist and Garrison the non-resistant. Rogers then offered a hypothetical scenario in which he defended Scott's abolitionism and concluded that doing so would not suddenly make him a Methodist. He ultimately believed the "sorts of opinions" like non-resistance were irreverent when individuals could come together and unite "for immediate emancipation."[77]

On April 18, Scott replied to Rogers. He opened on a cordial note, praising Rogers' "good natured" reply and admitting that "my pen is a little unruly sometimes." Nevertheless, he renewed his attack on non-resistance. "I will show it no mercy – give it no quarter," he declared. His letter, however, reveals the ways in which he agreed and differed with Rogers on extraneous material. Both men ultimately hoped to keep content unrelated to slavery and abolition out of antislavery discourse. "This is right," Scott approvingly wrote of Rogers' claims that he did not wish to engage in further coverage of non-resistance. That did not, however, stop him from complaining that Rogers had already introduced the subject into his paper and therefore needed to condemn it. This reveals the twin nature to Scott's perspective that cannot easily be reconciled: he saw non-resistance as an extraneous subject to be avoided but an existential threat to abolitionism that needed to be defeated. Although Scott struggled to grapple with the incongruity of these two positions, he could much more clearly articulate to why he opposed non-resistance and Garrison. "He not only 'abstains' but OPPOSES all human governments," Scott complained. The distinction is significant because it offers insight into the limitations of

[77] "ORANGE SCOTT.," *Liberator*, April 26, 1839, 4.

antislavery unity. Abstention acknowledged the legitimacy of the subject in question; total opposition did not. In that sense, Scott argued that abolitionism and non-resistance were built on fundamentally different and opposing principles because the former required using government power while the latter rejected the institutions with that very power. Scott further challenged Rogers's view that political action was not a feature of primitive abolitionism. In his telling, Garrison had transformed from an antislavery voter into an opponent of all human governments. Scott encapsulated his argument against Garrison with a simple question to Rogers: "Then he was a consistent abolitionist, but what is he now?"[78]

Scott also offered insight into the character of antislavery unity by addressing Rogers' example of Methodism. Like Rogers, he agreed that Methodists and Congregationalists should unite on common causes of temperance, abolition, and reform. But where Rogers believed almost all differences should be overlooked, Scott argued they should only be ignored so long as they did not hamper the causes that they shared. A person's Methodism or Congregationalism, Scott argued, were not liabilities to cooperation. Because these were simply different Christian denominations, he concluded, "Therefore as an *abolitionist* you have nothing to do with my Methodism, nor I with your Congregationalism."[79] Where Rogers believed Garrison's opposition to human government could be reconciled with those who differed, Scott argued that the issue could not be likened to religious denominations. If Garrison believed voting to be wrong, it would only be a matter of time before it became a test of orthodoxy in the movement. Scott also clarified at this juncture that he believed the U.S. Constitution was "an anti-slavery instrument"

[78] O. Scott, "ORANGE SCOTT.," *Liberator*, May 10, 1839, vol. 9, no. 19, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott claimed the sabbath, perfectionism, and even church membership were not barriers to antislavery cooperation.
[79] "I oppose him for advocating doctrines, which so far as his influence goes, will prevent abolitionists from voting at all – and of course from voting right. He may tell them if they do vote to vote right – but what of all that, when they know he holds that it is a moral wrong to vote at *all*, and when he pretends that religious considerations utterly preclude *his* voting?"

but reiterated that only political action could ensure that "anti-slavery principles" became "*anti-slavery laws*." For Scott, correct principles were paramount but not sufficient. Correct policy mattered too. "How are these principles to be carried out?" he asked, offering that the correct answer was "Plainly by legal enactments."[80]

He concluded his second letter to Rogers by emphasizing how Garrison had departed from primitive Garrisonianism. Scott reiterated his "other revelations" criticism but reframed it in more generally conservative terms. "The man who first sounded the note of alarm," he wrote, "has, it seems had *a new revelation*, and one which has so purified his conscience that he cannot vote for the holiest man on earth."[81] Going from "other revelations" to "new revelations" underscores that Scott believed modern Garrisonianism had abandoned its original ground with novel theories. They were not, as Rogers had suggested, simply an expansion of antislavery principle or sentiment. To Scott, they were antithetical to the original movement. And he worried that modifications to antislavery principle would only result in even more changes. This slippery slope, he worried in his first letter to Rogers, had already begun to turn political action from "solemn duty" into "a crime."[82] "What will come next?" he asked pointedly in the second letter.[83] Several months later, Rogers recalled his problem with Scott's views: "Mr. Scott considered it [non-resistance] an *extraneous* question, and yet wanted us to introduce it. And because we refused, he was angry, and withdrew his name from our paper."[84] During the debate,

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[80] Scott, "ORANGE SCOTT.," 4.
[81] Scott, "ORANGE SCOTT.," 4.
[82] "The Omitted Passage.," *Liberator*, May 10, 1839, vol. 9, no. 19, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[83] Scott, "ORANGE SCOTT.," 4. Rogers was critical of Scott's second letter, introducing it to his readers by observing that it did not improve the "renown" of "our brave fellow soldier." He also refused Scott's demand that he either affirm or condemn Garrison. "We respectfully, but pertinaciously, decline it – and we do it – precluding all conclusions as to our opinion of the theory. We are amused that brother Scott should demand it."
[84] "New Organization.," *Liberator*, January 3, 1840, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).

Scott repeatedly held two contradictory views: that non-resistance was an extraneous issue and that it needed to be opposed. Given Scott's writings on the subject, the most likely answer to this quandary is that he believed the principles of abolitionism and non-resistance could not co-exist and that one would need to defeat the other. Given his understanding of reform, his fears were not entirely without merit.

During the middle of April, Scott continued to act as an official antislavery agent by traveling to Winchendon and Athol, raising $26.67 and $34.87 respectively.[85] While the antislavery movement dominated much of his attention during this time, he did not completely neglect his church, his duties as a minister, or the denominational struggle over slavery. In January he had issued a call for another national convention of abolition Methodists. On April 6, he wrote to the *Zion's Herald* to endorse a convention on theological education, something which he admitted was a subject to which "I have devoted some thought." Although Scott offered no specifics on his personal views respecting the training of new ministers, his interest in the convention underscores his belief in church reform extending beyond the issue of slavery.[86]

Scott, however, remained focused on Garrison in 1839. After his defeat at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, he turned his attention to the American Anti-Slavery Society meeting on May 7. That spring, he and Amos A. Phelps sent out a circular letter to their allies calling on them to attend national and state society meetings. In much the same way Scott saw his position as primitive Methodism and Garrisonianism, the circular called on readers to help "maintain its [abolitionism's] original principles." Just as Garrison had alleged conspiracy

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[85] Henry C. Chapman, "Receipts into the Treasury of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Soc. From the 14th, to the 22d of April.," *Liberator*, April 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 17, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 28, 2022).
[86] O. Scott, "Another Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, January 26, 1839, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). O. Scott, "Theological Education.," *Zion's Watchman*, April 20, 1839, vol. 4, no. 16, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery (accessed April 12, 2022). Scott asked if the convention could be moved from April to the first week of May so that it could align with his schedule.

when faced with disagreement, Scott and Phelps spoke of a "crisis." They warned that "Certain individuals" were planning "to amend the Constitution of the American Society" to remove support for political action and antislavery legislation. Although they offered no insight into "the motives" of these actors, Scott and Phelps concluded that the plot "would result in the speedy destruction of the Anti-Slavery Society, if not the Anti-Slavery cause."[87] Although opposition to non-resistance and support for political action remained the central thesis of the letter, Scott and Phelps warned in the postscript that the "woman question" would also be discussed. Where Rogers considered these differences to be minor disagreements, Scott and Phelps worried non-resistance would transform the movement on its "fundamental points" and banish "every man who believes in the propriety of governmental action for the removal of slavery...."[88]

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society proved to be a defining moment in the fracturing of the antislavery movement. It brought the most important abolitionists on both sides of the non-resistance, voting, and women's rights questions into the same space, with both vying for control of the society. Mutual fears that the opposing side would subvert the original purpose of the organization further exacerbated tensions and eventually culminated with both sides going their separate ways.[89] Scott and his abolition Methodist allies played a visible role in this ideological and organizational divorce, opposing the Garrisonians and siding with the supporters of political action.

[87] O. Scott and A.A. Phelps, "Circular Sent by Scott and Phelps, Boston, April 16, 1839.," Boston Public Library, Rare Books Department, Anti-Slavery Collection, Digitized by Digital Commonwealth https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/2z1118907 (accessed April 27, 2021).
[88] O. Scott and A.A. Phelps, "Circular Sent by Scott and Phelps, Boston, April 16, 1839.," Boston Public Library, Rare Books Department, Anti-Slavery Collection, Digitized by Digital Commonwealth. https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/2z1118907 (accessed April 27, 2021).
[89] Garrison observed, "those who have plotted, in abolition garb, to throw the management of the Society in our hands, and ostracize a large portion of its earliest and most faithful members, ..." He likened this group to anti-abolitionists. See "Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, May 17, 1839, vol. 9, no. 20, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

Although Luther Lee opened the convention on the morning of May 7 with its first resolution – a rather innocuous measure describing slavery and religion as incompatible – it was not long before business turned political. Shortly thereafter, Henry B. Stanton offered a resolution touting the political power of the free states it. Lewis Tappan seconded Stanton's resolution.[90] But the question of women's rights, which had only appeared in the fringes of debate, became the flashpoint during the May 8 session. This stemmed from an amendment touted by Oliver Johnson to replace the word *men* with the more neutral *persons* during the Business Committee meeting. Amos A. Phelps strongly disagreed and quickly became a face of the opposition. Matters took an increasingly tumultuous turn when Ellis Gray Loring proposed a more controversial resolution on female participation. The Loring resolution won the day 180-140, with Scott speaking and voting with the dissenters. Nevertheless, this question was as much about the semantics of wording as it was about the principle itself.[91] Lewis Tappan and Charles T. Torrey protested the resolution and Amos A. Phelps presented a modified version of an earlier resolution which, rather than grant women equal rights, denied them of those privileges.[92]

When the society reconvened for their afternoon session on May 8, Scott offered his first resolution: a call for antislavery papers to publish the resolution on making up the roll, with vote and location attached. Afterwards, Scott did little to participate in the debates or proceedings of

[90] "Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, with the Speeches Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting Held in the City of New-York, on the 7th of May 1839 and the Minutes of the Meetings of the Society for Business, held on the Evening and the Three Following Days.," New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 143 Nassau Street, 1839), Sabin Americana (accessed February 10, 2021). For Luther Lee's resolution and speech, see p. 4-10; for Stanton and Tappan, see p. 12-22. For a roll of delegates, see p. 30-34.
[91] Many critics of Garrison, including Alvan Stewart, Joshua Leavitt, and Gerrit Smith voted in favor of the Loring resolution. La Roy Sunderland later complained that the only reason this resolution carried the day was because of the Massachusetts delegation, which amounted for over a third of the affirmative votes. See "Meeting of the American A.S. Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 1, 1839, vol. 4, no. 22, p. 4, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[92] "Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society," p. 28-30, 34. According to Garrison, Phelps wanted to "know precisely how far the Society was disposed to go" on women's rights. See "Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, May 17, 1839, vol. 9, no. 20, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

the annual meeting until the afternoon session of May 9, when he addressed the question of whether the antislavery societies should send agents into other free states that already had antislavery societies. This soon gave way to considerations of political action. These resolutions held the more moderate Birney ground that called for political action but did not demand it, rather than Scott's more extreme position. Scott did not join that debate, but he did vote for a resolution in favor of political action that was carried on May 10 by a narrow vote of 81-77.[93] He was also one of 123 members who signed an official Protest against the society because of its admission of women as voting members.[94] The Protest, which anchored its opposition to female participation to the "design and spirit" of the American Anti-Slavery Society's original "framers," nevertheless remained a minority position. Even Alvan Stewart, generally an ally of Scott's on political action, called for the creation of a committee to respond to it.[95] Scott, therefore, largely confined his participation at the society to the debates over political action and women's rights. But he was generally a supporting figure rather than a driving force.

Upon his return to Boston, William Lloyd Garrison remarked that the division between the two factions carried into how they departed the meeting. Scott, like many other New Englanders, "snatch[ed] a hasty meal," and left New York by steamboat an hour after the meeting adjourned at 4pm on May 10. He then took the steamboat to Stonington along with most

[93] "Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society," 39. "American Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, May 24, 1839, vol. 9, no. 21, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Garrison complained in the *Liberator* that this was largely the result of parliamentary chicanery. This resolution said, "Resolved, that this society still holds, as it has from the beginning, that the employment of the political franchises, as established by the constitution and laws of the country, so as to promise the abolition of slavery, is of high obligation – a duty, which, as abolitionists, we owe to our enslaved fellow countrymen groaning under legal oppression. See "Vote on Political Action.," *Friend of Man*, June 12, 1839, vol. 3, no. 52, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[94] "Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society," p. 44-47. This Protest included absent members. Scott was joined by many of his antislavery allies and fellow abolition Methodists, including Alanson St. Clair, Charles T. Torrey, Timothy Merritt, Lewis Tappan, La Roy Sunderland, George Storrs, Amos A. Phelps, Daniel Wise, George Allen, Phineas Crandall, Samuel Osgood, Jared Perkins, William H. Brewster. There was one significant name absent from the list, however: Luther Lee.
[95] "Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society," p. 45, 47.

of the Massachusetts delegation. Scott, who was in a roughly 3:1 minority among the delegation, found himself surrounded by people with whom he disagreed.[96] Among them was Henry C. Wright, the man Scott had identified as the ringleader of the non-resistance movement. Nevertheless, Garrison reported to readers of the *Liberator* that both Scott and Wright had engaged in "an amicable discussion" over the issues that divided them. This discussion continued from the late afternoon until nighttime, when both sides ended their debate in agreement on one point: "whether it was right to slay a brother at any time, or not, it was certainly not expedient to 'murder sleep' on that occasion."[97]

While Scott and Wright illustrated the potential for cordial disagreement, cooperation increasingly gave way to discord, dissension, and, eventually, disunion. Both the Garrisonian faction and their opponents were ultimately to blame for this. The *Liberator* continued to attack any who objected to Garrison's course, while the opposing side looked to establish a parallel antislavery movement that only exacerbated divisions. As an example of the way Garrison worsened matters, he continued to attack Scott and Phelps for disagreeing with him on the question of female participation. After republishing an article written by a colonizationist in the *Christian Mirror*, Garrison did not limit his attacks to that writer; he also attacked his abolitionist opponents. As he had done at other junctures, he linked his antislavery rivals with his anti-abolition enemies. "It must be very consoling to our bros. Phelps, Scott, [George] Allen, &c., to be eulogized by such a person," Garrison mocked, asking them, "can you tell us how it happens, that all that is corrupt, all that is pro-slavery, ..., admires your recent movements, and bids you

[96] "Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society," 29, 43. Scott was in respective minorities of 72-25 and 47-13 on women's rights and political action.
[97] "Scene on Board of a Steam-Boat.," *Liberator*, May 24, 1839, vol. 9, no. 21, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).

God speed...?"[98] Within a few weeks of returning to Massachusetts, the state society would soon be permanently divided, with Garrisonians remaining in the existing organization and the opposition forming the Massachusetts Abolition Society.[99] Although Scott did not attend either the state convention or the Massachusetts Abolition Society convention due to illness, he wrote a letter to the new society that Amos A. Phelps characterized as being "highly approving" of it. La Roy Sunderland was equally supportive, writing in the *Zion's Watchman* that he strongly endorsed the "greatly needed" organization and believed it would be "productive of good" under the supervision of men like Phelps and Scott. Scott, it should be noted, was selected as a vice president. He also donated $2 to it in early 1840 and recommended people subscribe or renew their subscriptions to its anti-*Liberator* newspaper, the *Massachusetts Abolitionist*.[100]

Scott's letter to Phelps offers insight into the extent to which he became involved with the new movement. He proposed writing articles in favor of it – although he was still deciding between writing in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, the *Philanthropist*, or the *Zion's Herald* – and offered suggestions to help it prosper. This included strategic and organizational advice. With respect to the former, he urged Phelps to take a clear and consistent position on Garrison in the *Massachusetts Abolitionist*. He further recommended that the paper commit to either waging war against Garrison or completely ignoring him. He then urged Phelps not to take the middle

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[98] "'Straws Show,' &c.," *Liberator*, May 24, 1839, vol. 9, no. 21, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[99] Scott did not attend this convention, although Charles T. Torrey and Amos A. Phelps did. For an account of the proceedings, see "New England Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Liberator*, May 31, 1839, vol. 9, no. 22, p. 2-3 and "Proceedings of the N.E. Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Liberator*, June 7, 1839, vol. 9, no. 23, p. 2-3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 28, 2022).
[100] A.A. Phelps, "Massachusetts Abolition Society.," *Liberator*, June 14, 1839, vol. 9, no. 24, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "Massachusetts Abolition Society.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 8, 1839, vol. 4, no. 23, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). "Officers of the New Organization.," *Liberator*, July 19, 1839, vol. 9, no. 29, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). "D.H. Emerson, "For the Abolitionist.," and "Collected by Luther Lee.," *Free American*, February 20, 1840, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

ground. “Are you not a little too much afraid of opposing Garrison and his foolery?” he asked, concluding that if Phelps was not committed to that course, then they should not “have his name in the paper.” Scott also endorsed Henry. B. Stanton and George Storrs for general agents of the new society and asked Phelps to come to Lowell “*immediately*.” Scott was cognizant of the power of narrative, and timing was crucial. Keenly aware that Garrison had a platform that could frame the seceders as villains, Scott felt that critics of Garrison needed to be proactive. They had to act before the Garrisonians did, “before the other side *strike*.”[101]

Meanwhile, Scott attended the New England annual conference at Lynn on June 5. Although slavery loomed as a central consideration for the conference, the delegates also explored other crucial denominational considerations: plans to celebrate their centenary and establish a new theological institution, the latter being a move which Scott, Jotham Horton, and Joseph A. Merrill had endorsed in April.[102] The conference also considered whether a new Providence Conference be created out of the New England Conference. More relevant to the slavery question, however, were considerations of church government and the power of presiding elders. Since the 1839 annual conference preceded the upcoming general conference, the

[101] O. Scott, “Orange Scott to Amos A. Phelps.,” Boston Public Library, Internet Archive (accessed April 27, 2021).
[102] O. Scott, J. Horton, and J.A. Merrill, “Theological Seminary.,” *Zion's Herald*, May 1, 1839, vol. 10, no. 18, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed December 2, 2022). These three ministers originally hoped to raise money for an antislavery university, but quickly scrapped the idea in favor of creating “a Theological Institution, established on *liberal principles*, ...” This subject became a source of debate, but Scott only played a minor role. His views were evolving during this time. By September, he arrived at four major conclusions. First, he thought it preferable to establish a theology department at an “existing literary institution.” But if Methodists decided to establish a new institution altogether, he thought it best to establish the school at Newbury, create its own “literary institution,”, and that “it should be *a manual labor school*.” Scott's reasoning rested on his largely popular preaching approach and his desire for evangelization. He supported a department over a new institution because it would be less expensive and, if a new institution was to be created, that it should be in Newbury because students could then “supply quite a number of Methodist congregations where the people are not able to support regular preaching.” He also thought Newbury's location and isolation would protect young ministers from being trained amid “baptized infidelity.” With respect to manual labor, Scott believed the students could help fund the school by working 3-4 hours a day. For Scott's complete outline of his plan and his rationale, see “O. Scott, “Theological Institution.,” *Zion's Herald*, October 16, 1839, vol. 10, no. 42, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed December 2, 2022).

attending ministers needed to select a slate of delegates for the Baltimore Conference. Scott, for his part, championed many of these questions in the days before the conference began. On June 1, he offered the *Zion's Herald* a list of five reforms he borrowed from the *Maine Wesleyan Journal* that he felt would be "well suited to the meridian of the New England Conference." These five reforms were a division of the conference, an examination into presiding elder reform, plans for centenary celebration, a committee on slavery with an eye to the general conference, and a "Revision of our financial system."[103]

During the annual conference, Scott was assigned to St. Paul's Church in Lowell, while fellow abolition Methodist Jotham Horton was stationed at Lowell's other church, Wesley Chapel. Scott's brother, Ephraim, was put on the Providence District at Bristol. In all three cases, they answered to anti-abolition presiding elder Bartholomew Otheman, a move that ensured Scott would not receive the same dispensation to pursue antislavery activities he had received during the previous two years. Although the presiding elder assignments favored the anti-abolition faction, the conference elected an entirely abolition Methodist delegation to Baltimore that included Jotham Horton, Isaac Bonney, Joseph A. Merrill, Orange Scott, Phineas Crandall, F. Upham, and E.W. Stickney, with A.D. Merrill among the reserve.[104] The other antislavery victory came on June 13 when a committee that included Scott, Joseph A. Merrill, Horton, and

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[103] "Session of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 5, 1839, vol. 10, no. 23, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed November 29, 2022). O. Scott, "Important Thoughts.," *Zion's Herald*, June 5, 1839, vol. 10, no. 23, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed November 29, 2022).

[104] "Appointments of the Preachers in the New-England Conference.," June 28, 1839, vol. 13, no. 45, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed November 29, 2022). For a sketch of the conference, see "The Session of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, June 19, 1839, vol. 10, no. 25, p. 2. According to the *Herald*, Christian Perfection became a subject of "deep interest" among the delegates. For an anonymous account of the workings of the election of delegates, see "A Member of the Conference, "Election of Delegates in the New England Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 29, 1839, vol. 4, no. 26, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Abolitionists suffered a "relapse" during the convention but still could take "consolation" in the fact that "O. Scott and J.A. Merrill were elected by handsome majorities, ..." St. Paul's Church, however, was not yet dedicated at the time of Scott's appointment. He oversaw the dedication of the church on November 14, 1839. See O. Scott, "Dedication.," *Zion's Herald*, November 6, 1839, vol. 10, no. 45, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed December 2, 2022).

Timothy Merritt exonerated La Roy Sunderland from anti-abolition charges. The month ended with all three New England annual conferences taking steps in an antislavery direction, to the point where a triumphant George Storrs boasted, "you will see the *whole* of New England *Methodism*, like the *three* who would not bow down to the golden image that Nebuchadnezer set up, ..."[105]

Scott weighed in on some of the decisions from the annual conference. He supported both the establishment of a new religious institution and the decision to divide the New England Conference. However, because the annual conference had no power to effectuate the latter, New England Methodists had to wait for the general conference to decide what it would do. Regarding the establishment a new religious institute, Scott urged caution. He had been assigned to a committee of five that was entrusted with holding a convention on the subject in 1840.[106] After the conference, he offered mild criticism of a plan put forth by Crandall to immediately set up an institute in Providence. Scott instead felt church financial resources should be prioritized elsewhere: supporting existing institutions, funding missions, and caring for superannuated preachers, widows, and orphans. Additionally, his opposition to immediate action rested on the familiar ground of conference rights: he believed the New England Conference needed to authorize a convention before such a convention could be held.[107] In ways that extended beyond

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[105] "Report.," *Zion's Watchman*, June 29, 1839, vol. 4, no. 26, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Geo. Storrs, "Maine Conference Erect.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 6, 1839, vol. 4, no. 27, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). This is a reference to Daniel 3:14-25, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship a golden idol.
[106] "Report of the Committee on Education.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 13, 1839, vol. 4, no. 28, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022).
[107] O. Scott, "New Seminary.," *Zion's Herald*, July 10, 1839, vol. 10, no. 28, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed November 29, 2022). Scott's reply to Crandall, written on July 3, challenged the proposal of setting up a seminary in Providence because there was already one close by. His argument for conference rights can be defined as thus: "the Conference did not judge that we needed such a Seminary as is proposed, is evident, from the fact that they took no action upon the subject." For Crandall's reply, see P. Crandall, "New Seminary.," *Zion's Herald*, July 17, 1839, vol. 10, no. 29, p. 2. Crandall made a noteworthy observation about Scott's views: "I have known that Br. Scott was a great stickler for Conference rights, but I did not before know that he carried the matter quite so far, as he evidently does in the communication in question. I believe the people have rights as well as Conference, ..."

slavery, Scott increasingly came to regard annual conferences as the principal authority in church government. Abolition Methodist ministers, however, were keenly aware that they were part of a state and national movement against slavery. After 1838, they generally sided with critics of Garrison and endorsed the Massachusetts Abolition Society. On the eve of the annual conference, Daniel Wise explained to readers of the *Zion's Herald* that the Massachusetts Abolition Society, not the old organization, was "Pure, unmixed, genuine, Christian abolition" and challenged what he considered "a base subserviency to the will of a few sectarians...."[108]

The Massachusetts Abolition Society and its ministerial constituency inaugurated the full-scale civil war that Scott had feared. The *Liberator* adopted just as polemical a course as Wise had when dealing with the defectors. Garrison criticized them as being "less catholic" than the existing organization while "J." – likely Oliver Johnson – argued that the old antislavery society was better off without those who cared only "to divide and distract us" and destroy the movement's "harmony."[109] Garrison, however, reserved his most scathing rebuke for the June 21 number of the *Liberator*. Under an article entitled "A Farce in One Act," he turned his rhetorical fire upon this "noise[y] and turbulent" group he described as "a mere faction." He did not only accuse them of conspiracy against himself or simply attack them personally – both of which he certainly did – he also accused them of not being genuine abolitionists by decrying them as "nominal abolitionists."[110] While Charles T. Torrey, Alanson St. Clair, and Daniel Wise bore the brunt of his rage, Garrison kept some in reserve for others. His criticism rested expressly on an

[108] Dan'l Wise., "New State Anti-Slavery Society.," *Zion's Herald*, June 5, 1839, vol. 10, no. 23, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed November 29, 2022).
[109] "Important Document.," *Liberator*, and J., "New England Anti-Slavery Convention.," May 31, 1839, vol. 9, no. 22, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Given that Oliver Johnson worked as an assistant editor for the *Liberator*, it is likely that "J." was shorthand for him.
[110] Garrison called Wise "a conceited, shallow man," alleged that Torrey was embezzling funds from the antislavery society and accused the founders of the Massachusetts Abolition Society of racism.

anti-clerical foundation. For him, unity was when people of different backgrounds – such as farmers, mechanics, men, and women – all "stand on the same platform" with "an equal amount of controlling power." He juxtaposed this egalitarian unity with his clerical opponents who wanted "the supremacy of a religious aristocracy."[111]

Garrison did not limit his complaints to Torrey or St. Clair, the men he had repeatedly identified as the leading instigators in the plot against him. Now, Garrison lumped every minister into that camp. The antislavery civil war, he noted, was "purely the work of clerical ambition and juggerly!" Yet he went further and named names. "Who are the men most active in fomenting divisions among us?" he asked. "Who but *Rev.* A.A. Phelps, *Rev.* St. Clair, *Rev.* C.T. Torrey, *Rev.* Daniel Wise, *Rev.* Orange Scott, *Rev.* George Allen, *Rev.* J. Le Bosquet, *et it genus omne*?"[112] Garrison's use of italics is illustrative because it reveals that he increasingly saw *all* ministers as identical and that he now considered Scott to be no better than the rest. If these ministers were removed, he concluded, "the laity would be of one heart and one mind."[113] The official response of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society largely echoed this same anti-clerical rhetoric. When Horace Moulton, an abolition Methodist minister, complained about the rhetoric against the ministry, "J." only replied with a quote from Orange Scott on his willingness

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[111] "A Farce in One Act.," *Liberator*, June 21, 1839, vol. 9, no. 25, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). Garrison repeatedly referenced the ministry in this polemic. He called it a "cleric-politico organization," and said that antislavery ministers supported the movement only to forestall opposition to the ministry: "They dare not so openly oppose, as they once did, an enterprise which they cordially hate; nay, they are compelled to acknowledge themselves abolitionists." He again claimed these abolitionists were colonizationists. His article concluded with a call for "the yeomanry of the State" and the people "who are resolved no more to be priest-ridden" to "resist this new movement as they would 'Satan transformed into an angel of light' – for 'it will not and it cannot come to good."

[112] *Et it genus omne* roughly translates "and all that sort."

[113] "A Farce in One Act.," 3. This was not an isolated incident. Garrison again used the strategy of listing ministers and italicizing "Rev." to reiterate the point that "it was a *clerical* plot!" See "Close Resemblance.," *Liberator*, March 6, 1840, vol. 10, no. 10, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

to try and set aside his differences with Garrison.[114] Ultimately, Scott and Phelps became two common names in Garrison's list of enemies.[115]

Garrisonian criticisms of Scott continued apace in the *Liberator*. Clother Gifford, in a letter to Garrison, complained of Scott's "resistance to non-resistance" and accused him of being inconsistent on the question of "consequences."[116] A week later, Garrison replied to Scott's public denunciation of him by arguing that Scott was in the company of "the advocates of slavery and colonization!" and ended by saying, "The new organization may have all the *ladies* – the old one will be satisfied to have all the *women*."[117] A correspondent, Equal Rights, contrasted the Garrisonian Samuel May – a "whole-souled abolitionist" – with Phelps, St. Clair, Torrey, and Scott. This writer singled Scott out because they deemed him "one of the most boisterous of the clan" and alleged that Scott's opposition to non-resistance and women's rights were proof that he

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[114] "Address to the Abolitionists of Massachusetts.," *Liberator*, July 19, 1839, vol. 9, no. 29, p. 2-3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). This address made the exact same contrast between "people" and "clerical gentlemen." It also listed Scott and Phelps among the plotters, claiming that their movement was "a sectarian and professional affair." Horace Moulton and J., "Letter from Horace Moulton.," *Liberator*, July 5, 1839, vol. 9, no. 27, p. 4, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).

[115] "Reply to James G. Birney.," *Liberator*, June 28, 1839, vol. 9, no. 26, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). In this letter, Garrison listed Orange Scott and Amos A. Phelps twice among his list of adversaries. This letter offers insight into why he adopted this harsh position against his former allies: he felt betrayed. "I never expected to receive such treatment from these brethren: - their conduct fills me with surprise and grief." In a letter to Samuel Osgood, Garrison once again included Phelps and Scott in his list of adversaries. He further cited the two men as having "never winced under any of my strictures upon the pro-slavery character of the clergy" because "the coat did not fit them." Yet Garrison ultimately concluded that they were no different because they belonged to religious organizations that had slaveholders. See Wm. Lloyd Garrison, "Reply to Dr. Osgood.," *Liberator*, August 2, 1839, vol. 9, no. 31, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). For Osgood's letter in which he expressed concern about Garrison's treatment of abolitionist like Phelps, Stanton, and Birney, see S. Osgood, "Letter from Rev. Dr. Osgood.," *Liberator*, August 2, 1839, vol. 9, no. 31, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). In another article, Garrison again specified "Messrs. Wright, Phelps, Scott." See "Miscellaneous Items.," *Liberator*, August 23, 1839, vol. 9, no. 34, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).

[116] Clother Gifford, "Letter from Clother Gifford.," *Liberator*, July 5, 1839, vol. 9, no. 27, p. 4, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).

[117] "Hear! Hear!" *Liberator*, July 12, 1839, vol. 9, no. 28, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). Garrison also labeled this a "purely clerical affair" because it had the support of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

and his coadjutors had "any thing but a true interest in the welfare of the slave" in mind.[118] Garrison even published Scott letters under the section "Refuge of Oppression," a portion of the first page of the *Liberator* often designed for proslavery and anti-abolition material. "Orange Scott is indeed an altered man in his temper and manners," Garrison wrote, "and in his bitter and scornful opposition to the pacific principles of the gospel of Christ, he is manifesting any thing but a chrisitan spirit." His editorial remarks ended by asking that God forgive Scott and even suggested he would go to hell.[119] In another instance, Henry C. Wright accused Scott and other ministers of "blasphemy!"[120]

In light of this criticism, Phelps wrote Garrison during the summer, citing a letter he had received from an abolitionist in Worcester who was reportedly accosted by Garrisonians that told him "to beware of A.A. Phelps, D. Wise, O. Scott, A. St. Clair, E. Wright Jr., and others, declaring them to be traitors, colonizationists, and bad men! [sic]"[121] Phelps alleged that Oliver Johnson, an agent for the state society, was among the group of Garrisonians. Hoping to protect abolitionists in the state from these "traitors," Phelps sarcastically requested that Garrison publish an account of the Worcester incident so that everyone would know if they met Scott, Phelps, or St. Clair then they were "*duly warned*" and to "*be ye ware*!"[122] Whether a snarky rejoinder to the Garrisonians or a sincere request that Garrison reign in some of his supporters,

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[118] Equal Rights, "The True Ground.," *Liberator*, July 19, 1839, vol. 9, no. 29, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).
[119] "Orange Scott.," *Liberator*, July 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 1, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). Garrison's critique of Scott here mirrored Scott's earlier criticism of him: both men argued that the other had been the one to change.
[120] H.C. Wright, "Letter from the General Agent.," *Liberator*, August 30, 1839, vol. 9, no. 35, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).
[121] Phelps ended this quotation with a close parenthesis, but there is not an open parenthesis. I have removed this close parentheses for clarity.
[122] Amos A. Phelps, "Amos A. Phelps, Letter to William Lloyd Garrison, July 8, 1839.," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/lettertomrgarris00phel (accessed April 27, 2021).

the incident underscores the extent to which both sides began to turn on one another and how the Garrisonians saw Scott and his fellow abolitionists as enemies.

Garrison offered a curt but insightful reply the following day. He returned Phelps' letter and refused to publish it because "I am not willing to make you appear ridiculous." He then suggested Phelps speak with Oliver Johnson if he wanted to know the other side of the story. In many respects, Garrison did not offer a firm denial that the Garrisonians were wielding divisive rhetoric against their antislavery opponents; he simply advised Phelps to leave the situation alone lest he appear "unduly sensitive and weakly credulous."[123] This underscores an important theme because of what was not said. Phelps wrote Garrison in search of some form of validation of his antislavery *bona fides*, and Garrison refused to grant it. Garrison's response skirted the question of whether Phelps, Scott, and the others *should* have been called traitors and bad men, and exclusively pondered the questions of *if* they had been called those terms and *how* should they respond if they had. Nowhere in Garrison's letter did he offer what Phelps really wanted: validation that his faction were genuine abolitionists, a point Garrison refused to concede.

Garrison's conduct, however, only alienated abolitionists that were already inclined to oppose him. The *Philanthropist* backed the Massachusetts Abolition Society and emphasized Garrison's polemics against its supporters. Citing the *Liberator* as proof, the paper noted that Garrison had engaged in a "vulgar attempt to stir up suspicion and prejudice" and exhibited an "intolerant spirit, which can vilify men such as Amos Phelps, Elizur Wright, Orange Scott, and Alanson St. Clair, because they choose to differ with Mr. [H.C.] Wright and co-adjutors." Wright, however, took his criticisms even further than Garrison. He excoriated the new society

[123] Wm. Lloyd Garrison, "William Lloyd Garrison to Amos A. Phelps, July 9, 1839.," Boston Public Library, Digital Commonwealth, https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:cv43qm742 (accessed April 27, 2021).

on non-resistance grounds, arguing that it was a place where "the advocates of blood and slaughter" could "gather under the wing of A.A. Phelps, Elizur Wright, Jr. and Orange Scott."[124]

That summer, Scott made good on his earlier promise to Phelps to write articles on behalf of the new society, one for the *Lowell Courier* and the other for the *Massachusetts Abolitionist*. In many respects, these letters largely recounted what the Massachusetts Abolition Society was and why readers should take an interest in it. However, both contained important elements worth examining. His article for the *Abolitionist* served as a public endorsement of the new society and reaffirmed his point that 1839 Garrisonianism was not the same as primitive abolitionism. This culminated with a complete rejection of Garrison's leadership.[125] The article is also noteworthy because Scott devoted a large portion of it to defending himself from allegations that he was opposed to women's rights. "We are as much in favor of women's rights as our opponents are," he wrote, adding that he believed they were entitled to "all the rights which nature or nature's God has given them." The disagreement between Scott and Garrison, then, rested on how they understood those rights. Scott, as we have seen, believed in gender complementarianism and that men and women had separate spheres in society. This did not, however, mean that he believed women played no role in moral reform. To the contrary, he believed they were important players, and he cited the British abolitionists as an example. In his view, he supported an original understanding of women's rights, where Garrison and his allies had embraced a "new doctrine of

[124] "A New Organization in Massachusetts.," *Philanthropist*, June 18, 1839, vol. 2, no. 20, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 12, 2022). H.C.W., "The Massachusetts Abolition Society.," *Liberator*, August 23, 1839, vol. 9, no. 35, p. 4, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed April 12, 2022). Wright went so far as to claim that Scott, Phelps, and Elizur Wright had all "abandoned the slave." He also claimed that they directed "prejudice" against non-resistance because they could not challenge its principles.

[125] Scott repeated this point. "That society [the old one] is not what it was when we joined" and "Our principles and measures are the same now as when we joined the society – we have not left our brethren; they have left us. We are as willing as ever to be united with them in the abolitionism of 1833 to 1837. He then summarized his views against Garrison as such, "*he destroys with one hand what he builds up with other*."

women's rights."[126] This echoes the same criticism that Scott leveled against Garrison on political action. In both instances, Scott felt Garrison could no longer be trusted as a leader of their movement because his principles were not eternal and timeless; they were constantly in flux and always evolving.[127]

The second article, written for the *Lowell Courier*, focused on promoting the Massachusetts Abolition Society to abolitionists in Lowell and Middlesex County. While the letter explained why a new society was needed and criticized the Garrisonian views of non-resistance and women's rights, it did so with a specific goal in mind. Scott urged abolitionists in the city and county to support a measure that would come before the local antislavery societies and transfer them to the Massachusetts Abolition Society. In the same way Garrison touted the old organization as being the inclusive one, Scott cast the new society as the one with greater diversity. "All sects and religions and those of no religion, are admitted," he wrote, saying that the only requirement of membership was that people "agree to the principles of the constitution."[128] This underscores Scott's view of antislavery cooperation. He believed unity could only occur among people of shared principles. And the issue of non-resistance was not merely an extraneous policy to him by the summer of 1839; it was a crucial matter of principle.

[126] Scott argued that women "acted a very important part in hastening the abolition of slavery in the West Indies." He did, however, contrast his view of active female participation with the Garrisonian notion that women should participate in "active membership in public conventions of men." He further expounded upon this idea in his *Lowell Courier* article, noting that believing that support for the inalienable rights of women did not mean that "we must be in favor of having a woman for president or governor...." Moreover, he rejected likening the situation with women to that of slaves, and further asked, "because we are in favor of children's rights, does it therefore follow that they must have all the privileges and perform all the duties of men?" See O. Scott, "Massachusetts Abolition Society.," *Liberator*, July 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 29, 2022).
[127] O. Scott, "Principles, Not Men.," *Liberator*, July 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 29, 2022). "Stick close to Garrison," he wrote, "and you may find out what abolition means hereafter – but for one, I am satisfied. ... I did not become a disorganizer in becoming an abolitionist."
[128] See O. Scott, "Massachusetts Abolition Society.," *Liberator*, July 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed November 29, 2022).

Scott's efforts to secure Middlesex County for the Massachusetts Abolition Society proved unsuccessful. During the meeting of the county antislavery society in Acton, Massachusetts on July 23, he was chosen as a member of the business committee and helped that committee draft up resolutions calling for political action and aligning the society with the new organization. He was joined by abolition Methodist allies, including Jotham Horton, Daniel Wise, and Horace Moulton. Alanson St. Clair also attended. According to the *Liberator*, this group of 24 in total arrived at Acton "in a huge omnibus, drawn by six horses."[129] After resolutions were read, Scott delivered one of the two speeches to conclude the morning session. Of this morning speech, Lucia Weston characterized it as such: "Orange Scott was there speaking ... screaming at the top of his lungs about slavery's being the creature of law, and like remarks."[130] After a lengthy debate on whether female members be allowed to vote, the resolutions were ultimately laid on the table by a vote of 54-46, with the women present being the deciding votes. In response, Scott and several others left the meeting to form a rival society. Garrison, however, once again reiterated his anti-clerical framing by listing names of the "prominent supporters" of the new organization and italicizing the title of reverend. He then characterized their desire to form a new society as "disgraceful."[131]

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[129] J., "The Middlesex Meeting.," *Liberator*, August 2, 1839, vol. 9, no. 31, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). The *Liberator* alleged that Scott recruited people who weren't even abolitionists and had "drummed [them] out for the occasion."

[130] Lucia Weston, "Lucia Weston to Deborah Weston, July 1839.," Boston Public Library, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/lettertodeardebo00west56 (accessed April 27, 2021). Lucia Weston alleged that one man forcibly dragged his wife to the new organization meeting against her wishes.

[131] "Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society.," "Another Factious Movement.," and J., "William Goodell.," *Liberator*, July 26, 1839, vol. 9, no. 30, p. 1, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). During his speech in the morning session, which the *Liberator's* "J." characterized as "a flaming speech in opposition to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society," Scott reportedly read an excerpt of a letter from William Goodell to Henry B. Stanton. J., "The Middlesex Meeting.," *Liberator*, August 2, 1839, vol. 9, no. 31, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).

Proponents of the Massachusetts Abolition Society did not confine their activities to Garrison-dominated Massachusetts. Days later, Scott, St. Clair, Wise, and Torrey traveled to Albany, New York to attend the National Anti-Slavery Convention from July 31 through August 2. Proponents of political action hoped to capitalize on their narrow victory in May and promote an antislavery third party by establishing a rule that abolitionists should vote. These resolutions, drafted by a Business Committee that included Scott, Henry B. Stanton, and John G. Whittier, called for abolitionists to purify their churches from slavery, abandon the two major parties, and "neglect no opportunity" to go to "the BALLOT-BOX" in order to preserve "the purest principles of both Conservative and Radical Republicanism."[132] Garrison, for his part, listed Orange Scott and Hiram Cummings as the principal leaders of the faction that had kept the question of non-resistance before the convention with "ridiculous harangues against non-resistants."[133] Whittier recalled that Garrison, who remained aloof from the proceedings, entered the controversy only to direct personal remarks against Scott and what he considered "an invidious bearing upon non-resistance...."[134] Garrison's most significant contribution to the meeting came in a form of a written Protest of its resolutions and his belief that the Business

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[132] "National Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, August 15, 1839, vol. 5, no. 49, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). One of the main resolutions that was ultimately adopted – that abolitionists only vote for those who advocate "the immediate ABOLITION OF SLAVERY" – was so broad even William Lloyd Garrison could join Scott. That resolution won 238-10.
[133] Wm. Lloyd Garrison, "National Anti-Slavery Convention.," National Anti-Slavery Convention.," August 9, 1839, vol. 9, no. 32, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). Orange Scott served on the business committee. For an account of the proceedings of the convention, see "National Convention.," *Liberator*, August 16, 1839, vol. 9, no. 33, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022). This account, however, contradicts Garrison's recollection. Garrison claimed that neither he nor any non-resistance supporters defended him from Scott's attacks. See "National Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Liberator*, August 9, 1839, vol. 9, no. 32, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 28, 2022) and "Political Action.," *Liberator*, September 13, 1839, vol. 9, no. 37, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).
[134] John G. Whittier, "Letter from J.G. Whittier.," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, August 15, 1839, vol. 5, no. 49, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Garrison refused to serve on the business committee with Orange Scott, John G. Whittier, and Henry B. Stanton.

Committee had made the convention a "mainly, if not exclusively, political" affair.[135] This critique is noteworthy because it underscores how dramatically Garrison differed from the abolitionism of Scott. It also illustrates how Scott's debate with Garrison largely served as a reflection of his debate with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Where the anti-abolition Methodists regarded slavery as a political affair, Garrison had increasingly adopted the exact opposite position and concluded that it was exclusively a moral problem. Scott agreed with Garrison on the premise but also believed that moral issues had political dimensions that could not be neglected. In this sense, Scott opposed both the anti-abolition conservatism of his church and the abolition radicalism of his erstwhile ally.

Scott also met with fellow abolition Methodists during the convention – including Luther Lee, La Roy Sunderland, and Jotham Horton – to discuss whether they should postpone the planned second national Methodist antislavery convention. After some discussion, they unanimously decided to wait until after the general conference.[136] Abolition Methodists were fighting a war on two fronts – against the Garrisonians and against the anti-abolition Methodists – and largely opted to postpone their fight with the latter group until 1840.[137] Yet even during this time, Scott continued to champion his increasingly populist and low church tendencies. In August, he endorsed a lay convention that was being organized by his old congregations in the Springfield District. "Never, in my judgment, was a Convention more loudly called for," he

[135] "National Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, August 15, 1839, vol. 5, no. 49, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Garrison's Protest made the "woman question" a point of emphasis. This was a smart tactical move because his view on women's rights was far more popular than his views on non-resistance.
[136] O. Scott, "Postponement of the Convention.," *Zion's Watchman*, August 10, 1839, vol. 4, no. 32, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Scott's reasoning rested on the assumption that they should first see what the general conference did on slavery.
[137] In an exception to this general trend, Scott wrote to the *Zion's Watchman* to attack the *Maine Wesleyan Journal* for its efforts "to *CRUSH Methodist abolitionism*" within that conference. See O. Scott, "Course of the Maine Wesleyan Journal.," *Zion's Watchman*, December 21, 1839, vol. 4, no. 51, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

observed of the state of church government in 1839. By supporting this convention, Scott again reaffirmed his belief that lay members should play a greater role in church business and ecclesiastical affairs. And he explicitly linked this conflict with the struggle over slavery.[138]

In the aftermath of the convention, Scott once again became a topic of conversation and ridicule among the Garrisonians. George Bradburn argued that Scott represented a school of thought aligned with Immanuel Kant that regarded conscience as "'nothing but a thought'" and even compared him to Roman Catholicism. Although clever, the remark did not accurately reflect Scott's views of conscience. As we have seen, he regarded conscience as a conduit between principle and policy, but one which still needed to adhere to an objective moral code. One could be sincere in applying conscience, but that alone did not make something good or evil. For Scott, conscience could be warped, corrupted, or just simply wrong. Bradburn's account of Scott during the convention, however, remains illustrative because it demonstrates how and why the Garrisonian camp came to despise a person whom they had once championed as the face of abolition Methodism. Bradburn's heated argument with Scott over non-resistance at the national convention culminated with Scott making a motion to adjourn while Bradburn still had a floor. Scott's "pugilistic propensities have rendered him somewhat notorious," Bradburn later recalled of Scott's "assault" on non-resistance. He likewise recounted that Scott remained unpersuaded when told his motion to adjourn was not in order. "It mattered not, that several assured him he was wrong," Bradburn said, "*he knew* he was right."[139]

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[138] O. Scott, "Lay Convention.," *Zion's Herald*, August 21, 1839, vol. 10, no. 34, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed December 2, 2022). Scott wrote of the church, "Must they receive and support a man, however, disagreeable he may be to them, and however much he may oppress them?" This referred to the situation where ministers and presiding elders were chosen without input from the laity To Scott, the lay convention was "a remedy." Nevertheless, slavery remained paramount. He hoped that while "contending for their own rights, I hope they will not forget the *bleeding slave*!"

[139] Geo. Bradburn, "Letter to a Friend on the Late National Convention.," *Liberator*, August 30, 1839, vol. 9, no. 35, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 29, 2022).

Scott, however, had not significantly changed during this time, even if William Lloyd Garrison believed that he had changed. The only change were his targets. When Scott had condemned anti-abolitionists and slaveholders in his church, the Garrisonians had applauded him. But when he criticized non-resistance with comparable alacrity, he became a self-righteous traitor to the cause. Bradburn's complaints against Scott exemplify how his temperament and character paved the way for a greater divide among antislavery Americans.

If Scott had originally been reluctant to engage the Garrisonians at first, he acted with far less restraint as the controversy continued. Hoping to prove Bradburn wrong, he wrote to John Quincy Adams upon his return to Lowell to ask him if his understanding of parliamentary procedures at the national convention had been correct. He soon received a reply. Writing to Joshua Leavitt in the *Emancipator*, Scott bragged that Adams "entirely" supported his views. Bradburn likewise refused to let the controversy end without a rejoinder of his own. Writing to Leavitt and Garrison, Bradburn complained that Scott had tried to silence him as a means "to prevent me from noticing at all the ludicrous attempts" to condemn non-resistance.[140]

That fall, Scott continued to coarsen his rhetoric against the Garrisonians. Writing to the *Zion's Herald* on September 19, he lamented resolutions passed by abolition Methodists in Holliston that supported the old society. "I exceedingly regret that even five members of the M.E. Church can be found in the whole of New-England," he wrote, "disposed to sustain that rotten-hearted, no human government, women's rights institution called the 'Massachusetts *Anti-Slavery* Society.'"[141] Scott's use of italics is crucial because it underscores his belief that the old

[140] "O. Scott and J.Q. Adams, "Letter from John Quincy Adams.," *Zion's Watchman*, September 7, 1839, vol. 4, no. 36, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). "A Question of Order.," *Liberator*, September 20, 1839, vol. 9, no. 38, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). Scott argued that he had made the motion to adjourn before Bradburn had begun speaking. Adams said this was acceptable.

[141] O. Scott, "The Secret Out.," *Liberator*, October 11, 1839, vol. 9, 41, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

organization had essentially ceased to be a legitimate antislavery institution. That assertion must be viewed in connection to his beliefs about the primacy of first principles. If non-resistance and abolitionism were as incompatible as he believed, it followed that Garrison and his allies had replaced the principles of primitive abolitionism with of those of modern non-resistance.

Garrison took note of Scott's remarks. The two men's comments together illustrate how irrevocable the split had become. No longer was Scott the "estimable brother" that Garrison had called him at the onset of the debate on October 26, 1838. Just under a year later, on October 11, 1839, he was now simply known as "this individual." Garrison, however, quickly pivoted from Scott and his rhetoric to taking the opportunity to use Scott to go after his other opponents: namely William Goodell of the *Friend of Man* and Joshua Leavitt of the *Emancipator*. He demanded they either affirm or condemn Scott.[142] Goodell obliged Garrison's request, although his reply was somewhat measured as simply saying that he did not "approve the language nor the sentiment quoted from Orange Scott." Nevertheless, Goodell, much to the chagrin of the Garrisonian faction, used the episode as an opportunity to draw a moral equivalency between Orange Scott and William Lloyd Garrison. The *Liberator's* "J." was unsatisfied with that reply. He argued that the Massachusetts Abolition Society shared Scott's view even if they did not say it out loud.[143] The Garrisonians, then, had come to regard Orange Scott as a bugaboo, and used his coarse rhetoric and his extreme ideas on non-resistance to attack other critics of Garrison. For

[142] O. Scott, "The Secret Out.," *Zion's Herald*, September 25, 1839, vol. 10, no. 39, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed December 2, 2022). "Orange Scott.," *Liberator*, October 11, 1839, vol. 9, no. 41, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (Accessed April 13, 2022).
[143] J. "Orange Scott.," *Liberator*, November 15, 1839, vol. 9, no. 46, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). "J." wrote that while the new organization did not use the words "rotten-hearted" as Scott had done, they still shared Scott's views. He further said that Goodell's comparison between Scott and Garrison's rhetoric was evasion. He and other Garrisonians would continue to employ Scott's use of "rotten" when assailing the Massachusetts Abolition Society. See J., "Rotten Timber.," *Liberator*, Nov. 29, 1839, vol. 9, no. 48, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).

example, Peter Jacques recalled that he once mistook Nathaniel Colver for Orange Scott because "no other man could talk this way."[144]

While Scott prioritized his war with Garrison during most of 1839, he began to shift his focus back to his own church as the schism with his former allies became a reality. With the general conference nearing and the split with Garrison a *fait accompli*, Scott had less need or desire to continue clashing with the Garrisonians. That October, he donated $25 to help sustain the *Zion's Watchman* as the definitive abolition Methodist newspaper.[145] Working in tandem with Jotham Horton, he further prepared to edit and publish a limited periodical entitled the *American Wesleyan Observer* that he envisioned running from January through June 1840 to cover the general conference. Even the *Liberator* took notice of the plan. After looking over a sample of what was to come, "J." offered qualified praise, remarking that what he saw was "a neatly executed sheet." Nevertheless, he informed readers that "We shall watch them" on the question of peace; but he did, however, also grudgingly concede that they were abolitionists.[146]

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[144] Peter Jacques, "No. II.," *Liberator*, Nov. 29, 1839, vol. 9, no. 48, p. 4, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). "He acted ridiculously ere the meeting was out, in my estimation, and when the meeting was out, and Garrison descended from the pulpit, he opened upon him such a storm of abuse, his eyes, twinkling like that of Fagin the Jew in 'Oliver Twist,' that I could stand it no longer; I jumped to the conclusion that it was Orange Scott. It must be him, said I to myself: no other man could talk in this way. .... It was not ORANGE SCOTT. It was NATHANIEL COLVER."

[145] "Centenary Record.," *Zion's Watchman*, October 19, 1839, vol. 4, no. 42, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). This fundraiser was part of a campaign to raise $3000 for the *Watchman* to commemorate the Centenary, with Scott tying for the third-largest single donation. George Storrs gave the most with $200 dollars and Joel Hayden donated $50. Scott also furnished twenty subscribers to the *Watchman* as a "New Year's Gift". See "New Year's Gift.," *Zion's Watchman*, December 14, 1839, vol. 4, no. 50, p. 3, and "New Year's Gift.," *Zion's Watchman*, December 28, 1839, vol. 4, no. 52, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

[146] J., "American Wesleyan Observer.," *Liberator*, November 15, 1839, vol. 9, no. 46, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). "J." wrote that, "The views of the editors on abolition and peace are well known. We shall watch them to see whether, on the last topic especially, they act on the principle of proving, or suffering all things to be proved in their columns." His only qualifying material on abolitionism likely had to do with the fact that Methodists were part of a proslavery church. The *Philanthropist*, like the *Liberator*, received an advance copy of the first number. See "The Wesleyan Observer.," *Philanthropist*, November 26, 1839, vol. 2, no. 38, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 1838.

The Scott-Garrison rivalry, then, did not have a clear endpoint. It continued well into the years after 1839, albeit in an increasingly one-sided manner. Scott largely withdrew from the personal debate as his attention became consumed with Methodism. Garrison and his supporters, however, continued to regard Scott as a turncoat. Palmer Tanner, an abolitionist from Centreville, Rhode Island, embodied one of type of response. "I am grieved and surprized that so able an advocate of truth," he wrote, "should wish to impose a political test on his brethren" and "that he should 'hate, with a perfect hatred,' one of the most plain and excellent principles found in the Gospel of Christ." Rather than feeling anger at Scott, Tanner only felt grief. Where Henry C. Wright had suggested Scott was destined for hell, Tanner instead asked God to "show him his inconsistency and forgive his error."[147] Others, however, adopted Wright's more confrontation tone. One subscriber to the *Liberator*, "Martha," took inspiration from reading Scott's articles critical of woman's rights and penned a poem for the *Liberator* that challenged him on the same anti-clerical foundation as Garrison.[148] Another correspondent, "An Old School Abolitionist" from Scott's own backyard of Lowell, wrote to the *Liberator* a few weeks later about the enemies of the old society. Speaking of some of the usual targets – including Henry B. Stanton, Amos A. Phelps, and Orange Scott – they asked Garrison, "where are they? Oh their fall!"[149]

Edmund Quincy likewise ridiculed that same class as traitors – Phelps, Scott, John G. Whittier, and Theodore Dwight Weld – and mocked them.[150] Wendell Philips, while traveling in

[147] Palmer Tanner, "Letter of Encouragement.," *Liberator*, January 3, 1840, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).
[148] Martha, "Thoughts.," *Liberator*, January 3, 1840, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 4, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). Martha's poem attacked the clergy in her penultimate stanza, "The Priest and Levite, passing near, / May cast on us their cruel scorn; / Christ being ours, what shall we fear? / Ours at resurrection mourn."
[149] An Old School Abolitionist, "Mr. Garrison:.," *Liberator*, February 7, 1840, vol. 10, no. 6, p. 2, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).
[150] Edmund Quincy, "History of the Church, Ministry and Sabbath Convention.," *Liberator*, March 19, 1841, vol. 11, no. 12, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). Quincy summarized this

Europe in 1840, wrote to the *Liberator* to offer his thoughts on the antislavery division and characterized Scott as believing non-resistance worse than slavery.[151] In her book *Right and Wrong in Massachusetts*, Maria Weston Chapman took aim at Scott's religious faith. Arguing that he and his clerical allies suffered from a "want of faith in God," she personally attacked him and observed that he had "deserted the cause" because he opposed "the advent of righteous and free principles." Chapman, however, seemingly vindicated Scott's longstanding fears by nonchalantly dismissing his concerns that non-resistance would obliterate all institutions. To her, Scott should accept the destruction of all civil and religious institutions since ending slavery was more important. By seeking to both abolish slavery and preserve institutions, she argued Scott had abandoned his duty.[152] But some, such as Jacob Noyes, continued to be optimistic. Writing to Garrison, Noyes concluded that Phelps, St. Clair and Torrey were "too far gone, ever to be recovered" but he still hoped that Scott and those like him "will see the error of their ways, and turn to the path of the just."[153] Nevertheless, most Garrisonians who spoke publicly about Scott after 1839 regarded him as little more than a traitor to their cause.

Orange Scott, however, did not let those attacks pass unnoticed. He largely ignored the Chapmans' and Phillips', instead focusing directly on Garrison himself. For Scott, Garrison had

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class by observing how the new society created "a disorganization of the moral nature." Notably, he mocked Weld as "an alamanack maker!" and observed how "Amos A. Phelps and Hubbard Winslow have kissed each other!"

[151] "Wendell Phillips.," *Liberator*, October 9, 1840, vol. 10, no. 41, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). Phillips presented a hypothetical scenario to assail Scott. A person he identified as "some Orange Scott" could claim "I think non-resistance worse than slavery!" Scott, then, became a face of extreme opposition to non-resistance. "Hold, Mr. Scott,' Phillips' reasonable chairman replied before being interrupted by Scott's repeated objections. Phillips also attacked James G. Birney and Luther Lee.

[152] Maria Weston Chapman, *Right and Wrong in Massachusetts* (Boston: Dow & Jackson's Anti-slavery Press, 1839), p. 164n, Sabin Americana (accessed November 30, 2022).

[153] Jacob Noyes, "Jacob Noyes to William Lloyd Garrison, January 28, 1840.," Boston Public Library, Rare Looks Department, Anti-Slavery Collection, Digital Commonwealth, https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:2z110210w (accessed April 28, 2021).

become the face of the non-resistance takeover of the antislavery movement. In the second half of 1840, Scott made one final rebuke of Garrison. In part, he wrote:

> Till within the last two years we have had unlimited confidence in Mr. Garrison. We have defended him in private and in public. But we must say, we have lost our confidence, in great measure, even in *his moral integrity*. We can no longer view him as an honorable, high minded man – no, not even as a man of *true moral principle*! We solemnly believe as we shall answer it to God another day, that he is seeking his own aggrandizement, more than the interest of either the white or colored. ... And now we ask, who that is acquainted with the history of Wm. Lloyd Garrison, can doubt, that he has *ulterior ends in view*? What has he and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society done for the last two years, but to press his notions of perfectionism, his opposition to all human governments and institutions, his determination to crowd forward the women into all public stations and duties, and also to make a constant war upon all those who oppose these inconsistent and ridiculous notions?[154]

Scott's break with Garrison was not instantaneous. Their debate only ended when the two men came to regard one another not as misguided people in the same cause, but as enemies. This occurred because they held or came to hold principles that could no longer be reconciled. While both had hoped conscience could facilitate continued cooperation, Scott ultimately rejected that model. Where Garrison saw conscience as an unerring guide and believed it was the atomized right of an individual, Scott regarded it as a duty that imposed collective responsibilities. Non-resistance became the fulcrum for their split, although it was exacerbated by the issue of women's rights. In both cases, Scott considered himself a supporter of the original Garrisonian position and that Garrison had embraced novel theories that transformed those two points into non-resistance and modern women's rights. In Scott's view, their conflict became one of principles. That disagreement ensured that the principle-policy paradigm could no longer be a

[154] Orange Scott, "Wm. Lloyd Garrison.," *Liberator*, October 2, 1840, vol. 10, no. 40, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed November 30, 2022). This article originally appeared in Scott's *American Wesleyan Observer*. He attacked Garrison for being the true disorganizer by adopting an "unprincipled and unmanly course" and criticized the way the Garrisonians had "thrust" the issue of women's rights into the World Anti-Slavery Convention that summer.

solution because Scott could not dismiss his differences with Garrison as an irrelevant policy dispute. Garrison's non-resistance represented as fundamental a challenge to Scott's worldview as anti-abolition Methodism did. Both obliterated his vision of Christian reform.

Scott nevertheless stood somewhat aloof from the other critics of Garrison. While he ultimately threw his support behind Phelps, St. Clair, Stanton, Birney, and other supporters of political action, he initially hoped to avoid an open collision with the Garrisonians. Although greatly concerned that Garrison had embraced non-resistance, he hoped to check the influence of those ideas by seeing Garrison gradually pushed to the margins. This rested on an assumption that while most abolitionists supported Garrison, they were ignorant of his radical views on peace and women's rights. Here Scott incorrectly calculated that his own views were shared by most Massachusetts abolitionists. The opposite was the case. As a result, his plan for a protracted campaign against Garrison was doomed to failure.

Garrison, however, ultimately understood in part *why* he and Scott had become such bitter foes. In a letter to Gerrit Smith, he discussed the doctrine of "Messrs. Birney, Stanton, Phelps and Scott" that called for all abolitionists to vote or leave the American Anti-Slavery Society. Scott had been an original proponent of this view. Although this oversimplified Scott's view to some degree, Garrison correctly captured why Scott adopted such an aggressive position: Scott believed the non-resistants were "men who have abandoned a great principle, a fundamental doctrine, an essential measure!"[155] In Scott's framing, the question between the Garrisonians and their opponents was not simply a matter of means or ends or the best way to emancipate slaves. The dispute was far more existential than that. The two sides disagreed about what the first principles of abolitionism should even be.

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[155] Wm. Lloyd Garrison., "Letter to Gerrit Smith.," *Liberator*, March 27, 1840, vol. 10, no. 13, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).

Nevertheless, Garrison still fundamentally misunderstood Scott's position. Thinking that he had ironclad evidence of the hypocrisy of men like Scott and Phelps, he cited an excerpt from the proceedings of the 1838 American Anti-Slavery annual meeting, where Scott and Phelps had served alongside him on a committee to rectify "the *common error*, that our enterprise is of a POLITICAL, and not RELIGIOUS character."[156] Yet in making this argument, Garrison inadvertently proved Scott's point. Scott always saw slavery as a moral and religious issue. He never changed on that. Even when supporting political action, he continued to regard slavery as a moral evil. Politics was but one theater where that struggle would take place. Because of his continued emphasis on moral suasion and political action, Scott found himself caught between the extremes of anti-abolition Methodism and modern Garrisonianism. Both seemingly drew a line of demarcation between politics and religion. Scott did not. The male abolitionist was a Christian *and* an American citizen. As a result, they needed to wield their moral influence *and* their elective franchise against slavery. These were different theaters in the same *moral* struggle.

On August 12, 1842, the *Liberator* published an article that amounted to one final lamentation of the downfall of antislavery unity and a last rebuke of the traitors. The article targeted by name all the enemies of Garrison in colorful, polemical terms. It listed 16 people and excoriated them in varying degrees, beginning with James G. Birney and ending with William Goodell. Eighth on this list was Orange Scott. "Where is Orange Scott, who once shook the Methodist hierarchy to its foundation with his anti-slavery thunder?" the article read, before answering its own question: He was "Morally defunct" because "He fought like a madman against non-resistance, and has miserably perished so far as the cause of reform is concerned."[157]

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[156] "Beriah Greene.," *Liberator*, October 30, 1840, vol. 10, no. 44, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022).

[157] "Sturge's Visit to the United States.," *Liberator*, August 12, 1842, vol. 12, no. 32, p. 3, Gale, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers (accessed November 30, 2022). This article attacked James G. Birney, Henry B. Stanton,

Scott was no longer an abolitionist or even a moral reformer; he was metaphorically dead to his former allies.

Yet in this debate, Scott raised an intriguing consideration by casting himself as the true Garrisonian in the argument with William Lloyd Garrison. The answer to the question of whether he was correct is beyond the scope of this work; what matters, however, is that he believed it to be true. For Scott, true Garrisonianism and true Wesleyanism – the worldviews in their primitive states – were ultimately one and the same. They only needed to be restored to their original form. Scott would continue this debate with the opposing extremes of a modern, corrupted Methodism and a modern, non-resistance Garrisonianism in the years that followed. Yet rather than simply complain about the problems with present institutions, Scott turned away from merely conserving pure principles within existing organizations. Fueled by his defeats, he instead set out in the work of restoring first principles under new banners. This culminated with his final project: the construction of a new religious institution that was at once Wesleyan and Garrisonian. This is the subject of the two chapter that follow.

Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimke, Amos A. Phelps, Elizur Wright, Jr., Daniel Wise, Orange Scott, La Roy Sunderland, Hiram Cummings, Alanson St. Clair, David Root, George Storrs, Charles W. Denison, Nathaniel Colver, and William Goodell. It concluded this "catalogue" by observing that "All these individuals were consecrated to the work of abolishing slavery, (before the division took place in our ranks,)" but, by 1842, "every one of them stands in a detached and anomalous position, and nearly all of them have ceased to be of any service to our cause!"

Chapter 11: Orange Scott and the Wesleyan Methodist Secession, Part I

On January 2, 1840, Orange Scott and Jotham Horton published the first number of their *American Wesleyan Observer*. Based in Lowell, the paper was a limited series designed to cover the leadup and aftermath of the General Conference in Baltimore in May. Its prospectus, co-written by Scott and Horton, explained why they had ventured into the crowded field of the newspaper business. "The press is a most powerful engine for good or evil," they declared, arguing that their paper was intended to solely focus on the six-month period from January through June of 1840, which they described as "one of the most important periods in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church."[1] In many respects, Scott and Horton's prediction was vindicated. The Baltimore Conference proved to be the beginning of the end for the Methodist Episcopal Church as it existed up to that point.

This chapter and the next one will explore Scott's actions and movements during the years 1840-1847, paying specific attention to the schism between the Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodists in 1842-1843. Scott's withdrawal from the church and the creation of a rival denomination should not be seen as a mere curiosity. The Wesleyans ultimately did not eclipse their Episcopal Methodist counterparts, but their secession produced a fundamental transformation across the entire Methodist family. Scott in part impelled northern Methodists to take a stronger stance on slavery, if for no other reason than for the sake of their own denominational self-preservation. It also afforded Scott the opportunity to construct a church which aligned with his worldview. This is crucial because the Wesleyan Methodist Church, as

[1] Jotham Horton and Orange Scott, "Prospectus.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, January 2, 1840, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022). The final number of the paper was August 13. See O. Scott, "The Wesleyan Observer.," *Zion's Herald*, August 5, 1840, vol. 11, no. 32, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

we will see, came to embody the conservative and radical tendencies that Scott had espoused over the course of his life. And that church also represented a continuation of his debates with the anti-abolition Methodists and supporters of William Lloyd Garrison. With respect to the former, the internecine religious struggle between abolition and anti-abolition Methodists shifted into an inter-denominational struggle between Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodists; meanwhile, Scott's withdrawal from an anti-abolition church thrust him into a position where he felt compelled to reign in what he saw as the Garrisonian excesses of some of his own followers. One of his last major public acts would be to challenge that class of Garrisonian Wesleyans.

These two chapters have three major objectives. First, they will explore Scott's role in the Wesleyan schism, tracing this through the Baltimore Conference and culminating with his withdrawal in 1842. I argue that the general conference proved to be the final breaking point for Scott and I interpret his actions from that prism. Second, they explore the creation of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1843 and the church's early years. I will primarily examine this period through one of Scott's major obligations: his editorship and proprietorship of the denomination's unofficial organ, the *True Wesleyan*. I argue that this paper illustrates that Scott remained a committed abolitionist even as he largely withdrew from the antislavery movement's day-to-day activities. Although he remained an officer in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Scott transferred much of his zeal into his new denomination.[2] In essence, his new denomination became a manifestation of his antislavery commitment. Third, I look at Scott's final years, chronicling his role as the Wesleyan Book Agent. During this time, Scott engaged in

[2] "American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.," *Free American*, May 28, 1840, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Scott served on the executive committee and would remain affiliated in name with the organization until his death. He was also listed as an officer for 1846-1847. See "The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberty Alamanc*, January 1847, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 14, 2022).

one final debate with William Lloyd Garrison: this time with the Wesleyans who had become more Garrisonian than they were Wesleyan. Garrison and his lieutenants continued to criticize Scott during the 1840s, but Scott largely ignored them, opting instead to chart his own, insular course. These chapters, however, are not a meticulous history of the Wesleyan secession. That project is beyond the scope of this work and is worthy as a prospect for future research. Instead, I will focus predominantly on Scott personally and how the church reflected the worldview he had developed and refined over the course of his life.

I argue that by 1840, Scott largely knew the abolitionists had been defeated in the political and religious arenas. He concluded that these existing institutions could not be reformed in their existing state and would need to be reborn. The Wesleyan Methodist Connection was an expression of that conviction. He abandoned his desire to conserve the Methodist Episcopal Church of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke. That church had ceased to exist by 1840. Instead, Scott set out to recreate the old church himself. In that sense, Scott no longer believed abolition Methodism was about the next general conference or the next presidential election. If slavery was to be destroyed, it would be accomplished by the generation that he and his supporters created and mentored.

After 1840, Scott adopted this increasingly inward-looking focus. While he never explained the reasoning for this pivot, his rift with Garrison undoubtedly isolated him from a considerable portion of abolitionists in New England. His *American Wesleyan Observer* exemplified this approach, viewing slavery as a religious issue and one in which the churches needed to assume a leadership role. At another juncture, Scott clarified that the paper was not an antislavery paper; it was instead "an anti-sin paper in all its forms."[3] The paper's subject matter

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[3] S., "Moral Reform.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, January 2, 1840, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 4, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022). Scott wrote this in response to an article from

emphasized matters related to the Methodist Episcopal Church and published abolitionists like Luther Lee, Jared Perkins, and Daniel Wise during its run. Scott and Horton, however, offered a crucial qualification to this. They were no longer advocating Methodist abolitionism exclusively, but what they termed "the advocacy of Wesleyan Methodism as our principal design, ..."[4] The idea of Wesleyan Methodism would become integral to the identity of abolition Methodists like Scott and Horton, who increasingly saw their brand of Methodism as being at odds with the established Episcopal Methodism of the day. Given that they believed that their vision of Methodism was more closely aligned with John Wesley, this helped create a fracture point for Methodists on opposing sides of the slavery question. As seen in the years following the Cincinnati Conference, the debate over slavery had also become a debate over bishops, annual conferences, presiding elders, and the rights of laity. These "Wesleyan Methodists" were becoming radical on church government because the tools of church government had been utilized to silence their abolitionism. Scott and Horton's "Our Course" should not be read as the simple outline for the *Observer* as a newspaper; it was also a proto manifesto for what would become the Wesleyan Methodist Connection and its paper, the *True Wesleyan*.[5]

The *American Wesleyan Observer* also represented Scott's return to the publishing business. Not only did he jointly own and edit a newspaper with Horton; he also published his

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his protégé, Lucius C. Matlack, who hoped that they would not confine themselves to one moral issue and speak about "moral reform" in other areas, with seduction being the example he chose to discuss in detail. This did not stop anti-abolition Methodists from criticizing the paper on the basis that it was an antislavery paper. The *Western Christian Advocate* noted in its review of the first number that "Every blow struck, as the Observer proposes, will strengthen evil, and wound its antagonist. Look at the last General conference." See "American Wesleyan Observer.," *Western Christian Advocate*, November 22, 1839, vol. 6, no. 31, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022).

[4] Horton and Scott promised to promote antislavery principles without consideration of "extraneous questions."

[5] Jotham Horton and Orange Scott, "Our Course.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, January 2, 1840, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022). This essay explored questions of religious and literary institutions and theological concepts like holiness. While these certainly were matters appropriate for a paper, it should be noted that this document bears a striking resemblance with the first number of the *True Wesleyan* in 1843, down to the reuse of some of the same phrases.

first wife's memoirs during this time. Edward A. Rice, a publisher in Lowell, advertised this work as part of the city's Methodist Bookstore alongside works like Nathan Bang's *History of Methodism*. But the forthcoming memoirs of Amey Scott received the lengthiest description among all the works on hand. While promoting the work, Rice described it as, "a valuable little work, especially for those who were acquainted with the deceased, for Sabbath schools and young people generally."[6] Rice's advertisement offers insight into some of the reasons why Orange Scott ultimately chose to make Amey Scott's memoirs public. Although partly a tribute to her, it also had theological utility. His first wife, who had long struggled with doubts about her salvation, had meticulously recorded her daily ruminations and struggles. She ultimately navigated her way through that malaise with the help of her God and her husband. Rice's observation that the work would be well-suited for sabbath schools and the youth, therefore, illustrates one of the likely reasons Scott chose to publish it: the work was a guide to help young people by offering them his first wife as a guide.

In the months that preceded the general conference, Scott looked to his own church and local community in Lowell rather than to the antislavery movement more broadly. In late February, Scott traveled to Boston to support the revivals in the Methodist community in the city. During that time, he preached four times in Boston and once in Charlestown over a six-day span. On February 23, he delivered a lecture and preached the annual sermon for the Boston Female Friendly Society, an organization designed to help provide relief for the poor. Scott favorably wrote that this society helped the impoverished "without regard to color, sex, or religion" and that it had, in its twenty years of existence, "done a vast amount of good." His remarks are significant because they offer greater clarity into Scott's views about women. Not

[6] E.A. Rice & Co., "Book Store and Book Bindery.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, January 2, 1840, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022).

only did he support that organization; he hoped to see "something of the kind to every Methodist congregation in the land."[7]

This view underscores Scott's understanding of gender complementarianism as a component of women's rights. Rather than adopting a rigid public-private distinction between men and women, Scott articulated a belief that men and women were spiritually equal but had differing public roles. This distinction was more political than it was social, with Scott believing that political matters were the domain of men. That is why he disagreed with admitting women to the American Anti-Slavery Society and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, since both organizations needed to address political subjects. When correspondent "Anna" for the *American Wesleyan Observer* wrote to the paper, Scott replied to her that he and Horton had received her work and that they would soon publish it. "We hope to be favored with the effusions of her pen often, both in prose and poetry," he said of her work.[8]

Since be stationed in Lowell in 1836, Scott had always held a love for the city and its people. He admired its businesses and its laborers. In an article for the *American Wesleyan Observer*, he and Horton touted its economic productivity and ended their effusive account of its history and economy with the statement, "To strangers we would say – *visit it*" because "every American who sees it, feels proud that such a city exists on this side of the Atlantic." In the weeks that followed his lecture at Boston, he returned to his foundations as a popular preacher and promoter of revivalism, opening the month of March with a revival at St. Paul's Church. Between March 1 and March 8, he estimated that "About *twenty* we think have been converted

[7] S., "Revivals.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, February 27, 1840, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022). Untitled.," *Zion's Herald*, February 19, 1840, vol. 11, no. 8, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 3, 2022). The discourse was held in the evening at "the Church in Bromfield street."

[8] Untitled.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, February 27, 1840, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022).

within the last *eight days*!" This took place over several days during that week with over a hundred and thirty coming forward for prayers. Hoping to capitalize on this, Scott organized an impromptu prayer meeting on the evening of March 6, which resulted in one of most successful prayer to convert ratios of the entire revival.[9] He also planned to organize a protracted meeting of ten days to close out the month, and intended to enlist A.D. Merrill, then stationed in Providence, to help with the revival. This revival, however, did not occur in a vacuum. Scott and Horton had been building to it since assuming their respective stations in Lowell at St. Paul's and Wesley Chapel since the summer of 1839. By the end of 1839, both Horton and Scott's congregations had added 30 to 40 converts and accepted just under 100 on trial.[10]

Scott's report of the revival concluded with a statement worth closer examination. "The kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," he wrote.[11] That phrase, reminiscent of the rhetoric employed by the non-resistants, underscores an important point. When a Henry C. Wright or a William Lloyd Garrison spoke of the supremacy of divine governments, Scott did not disagree with them. Like them, he wanted the government of God to rule over the world. The difference, then, had always rested on Scott's belief that the only way to accomplish that end would be for human governments to be reformed so they more properly aligned with divine government. Scott's conservatism, the same kind of conservatism seen in his debate with Thomas Whittemore, explains this difference. Where Garrison and

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[9] "Lowell, Mass.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, January 2, 1840, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022). O. Scott, "Revival in Lowell.," *Zion's Herald*, March 11, 1840, vol. 11, no. 11, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 3, 2022). About thirty persons came forward for prayers, and "*five or six*" converted. This was a 16% or 20% conversion rate, which trumped March 3's 10% and March 7's 8-9%. Only March 3's 25% was higher.

[10] S., "State of Religion in Lowell.," *American Wesleyan Observer*, January 2, 1840, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society, Historical Periodicals Collection (accessed March 30, 2022). Scott also reported that he had baptized 26 since the annual conference, that the sabbath schools were "in a state of prosperity," and that he had raised $1,300 for the Methodist centenary since taking over the station, with Horton having already raised $500.

[11] Scott, "Revival in Lowell.," 3.

Wright had believed that freeing humans from immoral government was the best way to accomplish that end, Scott believed it could only occur through some degree of restraint. As seen, Scott believed human nature was flawed and had a tendency towards evil. Laws existed as a check on the people who could not be brought to righteousness through moral suasion. That is why governments served as the final stage of his Wheel of Reform: they made social change permanent by enforcing just laws.

Even as he turned towards the local and regional affairs of his denomination, Scott remained interested in the antislavery movement. His focus merely turned back to the Methodist Episcopal Church, reflecting his longstanding belief that moral reform began in the churches. Slavery, he had believed since 1835, could only endure so long as the churches affirmed or tolerated it. To that end, he wrote in March 1840 that he believed the *Zion's Herald* should become even more vocally antislavery. Scott's critique – very gentle by his standards – nevertheless irked William C. Brown, who wrote that he "hardly know[s] what Br. Scott means" and boasted that "We have no *complaints* from any quarter...."[12] When pressed by Brown, however, Scott went on the offensive and, after citing a plethora of statistics, argued that the *Herald's* coverage had become "pretty temperate on that subject."[13]

Scott continued his revival into April, speaking of it in even more effusive terms than he had during the previous month. He was greatly pleased with the results. Although he felt that all evangelical churches were enjoying success, he believed that his church had been "especially

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[12] Scott said he felt members of the New England and New Hampshire conferences would be "better pleased" if the paper became "more decidedly anti-slavery...." He claimed that his criticism had been done "in the *mildest possible manner*" and reiterated the phrase "better pleased." In his view, he simply said he wanted to make a good publication a better one.

[13] O. Scott, "Questions Answered.," *Zion's Herald*, April 1, 1840, vol. 11, no. 14, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 3, 2022). Scott's exhaustive review of the paper from April 1839 through 1840, what he called "an accurate examination," concluded that: outside of one exception, "not two columns of editorial (perhaps not one) including all you have said on slavery, abolition and emancipation, can be found." He did the same for antislavery communications from correspondents and selections from other antislavery papers.

favored." Given Scott's earlier success in Lowell in 1836, his assertion that "There has never been such a time known here before" carries considerable weight. In a letter to the *Zion's Herald*, Scott estimated that they had received 123 people on probation within an eight-day span. On April 12, Scott baptized 84 of these individuals while Horton baptized 30. St. Paul's Church, normally attended by 1200 and 1300 people, was forced to accommodate more than 1400 people during the revival.[14]

Later that month, Scott and Horton invited Luther Lee to come preach at their respective churches. In Lee's view, the revival of religion had also produced a noteworthy consequence: the congregations at St. Paul's and Wesley Chapel were "abolitionists, almost without exception." Both Scott and Horton opened services in their churches that morning by circulating a petition for the general conference calling on the church to return to "the original ground" on slavery, which Lee estimated had obtained "seven to eight hundred names...." For Lee, Scott and Horton were a template to be emulated by Methodist churches across the free states. "If all the ministers of the Gospel were to speak out for the slave, as these two brethren have," he surmised, would not their congregations also be abolitionized?"[15] It is important to note that Scott enjoyed this success by promoting revival first and abolitionism second. As he displayed during his earlier days as stationed minister and presiding elder, Scott believed in bringing people to religion and then helping religion transform them. This is another instance of that approach in action.

All of Scott's evangelization and abolitionism culminated at the Baltimore Conference, which convened on May 1, 1840. The convention brought together many familiar figures from

[14] O. Scott, "Lowell, Mass.," *Zion's Herald*, April 15, 1840, vol. 11, no. 16, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 3, 2022). Scott wrote that the baptisms had "drawn together than unusual number." Of the 84 that Scott baptized, he did 13 by sprinkling and 71 by immersion. In his letter to William C. Brown, he recounted that it rained as he began the baptisms, which he believed had been a message from God.
[15] Luther Lee, "A Sabbath at Lowell.," *Free American*, April 30, 1840, vol. 2, no. 11, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

across the annual conferences in the national church. Scott and his New England allies were joined by a New Hampshire Conference that included his old friend from his early years in the ministry, John F. Adams, as well as Jared Perkins. Both men had been among the "Cincinnati Fourteen" that had opposed the 1836 anti-abolition resolutions. But many of Scott's adversaries also attended. George Peck, the minister who had opposed him during the 1838 Oneida Conference, attended as one of the six delegates from that conference. Similarly, Nathan Bangs of New York, Williams Winans of Mississippi, and William Capers of South Carolina also attended; Stephen G. Roszell – the author of the anti-abolition resolutions at Cincinnati – and William A. Smith – the man who famously wished Scott was in heaven – both represented their annual conferences.[16] Given the composition of the general conference, the abolition Methodists faced a daunting task at Baltimore.

A meticulous session-by-session account of the Baltimore Conference is beyond the scope of this chapter. Like the 1836 Cincinnati Conference, however, this general conference fundamentally changed the way that Scott viewed his church. In many respects, the Baltimore Conference crystallized and solidified the trends within the national church that were established at Cincinnati. This general conference, which lasted for over a month, resulted in a nearly total victory for the proslavery and anti-abolition factions. Once again, this was only made possible by the uneasy truce between them and their unified opposition to the abolitionists.

While absent from Lowell to attend the Baltimore Conference, Scott handed over the management of the *American Wesleyan Observer* and the preaching at St. Paul's to Lucius C. Matlack. Matlack, an antislavery minister who had been driven out of the Philadelphia

[16] "Delegates to the Thirteenth General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, March 6, 1840, vol. 14, no. 29, p. 2, "Delegates to the Thirteenth General Conference.," American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 3, 2022). "Untitled.," *Western Christian Advocate*, April 3, 1840, vol. 6, no. 50, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022).

Conference for his views on slavery, had taken up residence in Lowell during the latter half of 1839. In that time, Scott befriended him and took him under his wing.[17] Born in 1816, Matlack became involved in the Methodist Episcopal Church from a young age through the sabbath school of the Union Methodist Episcopal Church at Philadelphia, later becoming a teaching assistant there at sixteen and a superintendent at eighteen. After losing his license, Matlack faced a difficult situation with nowhere to work.[18] In May 1839, Scott and Matlack began corresponding over Lowell as a possible destination for him. Given the construction of St. Paul's at the time, Scott wrote to Matlack to inform him that the Methodist Society had requested Matlack as an assistant preacher. "They want, and I want Bro. Matlack to assist me," he implored Matlack, informing him that the position would likely last from June through November 1839. Nevertheless, Matlack's move to New England proved to be more than a temporary job; he went on to become a licensed preacher and member of the annual conference.[19] During that time, Scott formed a close friendship with Matlack that would last the rest of his life.

While Matlack substituted for Scott in Lowell, the Baltimore Conference proved to be the significant challenge that Scott and Horton had suspected. Entering the conference, all sides

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[17] Lucius C. Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 166. Matlack said of his tenure managing the *Observer* that he incorporated antislavery material and communications "advocating 'a moderate episcopacy' and 'laymen's rights.'" In the context of this, it is worth noting that Orange Scott wrote to William C. Brown in the *Zion's Herald* on August 22, 1839 in reply to advertisements he had seen asking for a preacher. "I know of an excellent, young man with a wife and one child, who can be obtained to fill some appointment on the 12th day of September next," Scott wrote, saying that if a preacher in the New England Conference could support a preacher and family then "I would be glad to be informed without delay." This unidentified preacher was likely Lucius C. Matlack, who, according to his own autobiography, was married before moving to Lowell. See O. Scott, "Response.," *Zion's Herald*, August 28, 1839, vol. 10, no. 35, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 3, 2022).
[18] L.C. Matlack, *Secession. A Personal Narrative of Proscription, for Being an Abolitionist*, South Salina St. Syracuse, New York, 1856, HathiTrust (accessed April 22, 2022), 5-6, 28, 42-43. This work is part autobiography and part account of his being stripped of his license to preach by the Philadelphia Conference. It was Timothy Merritt who initially invited Matlack to come to New England and cited Edgartown as a potential destination; at the time, however, Matlack declined and focused on the unsuccessful effort to clear his name.
[19] O. Scott, quoted in Matlack, *Secession*., 44-45. By the end of May, Scott wrote Matlack again to tell him that the Board of the Methodist Society in Lowell had reaffirmed their desire that he move there and offered him the prospect of work after November 1839. Matlack left Philadelphia on June 3 and arrived in Lowell on June 5. For an account of Matlack's tenure in New England, see Matlack, *Secession*, 49-57.

knew it would be a momentous and divisive affair. The editors of the *Western Christian Advocate* even issued a call for readers to pray for the conference and specifically asked them to pray for unity and peace.[20] In total, the general conference included 129 delegates from across the twenty-eight annual conferences, five of the six bishops, a representative from Canada, and two representatives of the British Wesleyan Methodist Conference.[21] The first day of the general conference dealt largely with organizational matters and committee assignments. Nathan Bangs also proposed hiring a reporter to record the proceedings of the conference.[22] The committees established on the opening day dealt with episcopacy, boundaries, itineracy, the Book Concern, missions, education, unfinished business, expenses of the delegates, and temperance, with the first two having one member from each conference that was chosen by that conference's delegation. Scott served on none of these initial committees; Joseph A. Merrill and Phineas Crandall were respectively chosen to serve on the committees for episcopacy and boundaries while Jotham Horton was appointed to the committee on itinerary.[23] Scott's contributions to the general conference came the next day. Bishop James Andrew, presiding over the morning session on May 2, opened the conference up to memorials, petitions, and appeals. Nathan Bangs first offered two memorials: one from Liberia asking for an episcopal office and another on sabbath schools in New York.[24]

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[20] "Pray for the General Conference.," *Western Christian Advocate*, April 24, 1840, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022).

[21] "Doings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 8, 1840, vol. 14, no. 38, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Bishop Joshua Soule was the only bishop who did not attend the opening of the conference due to ill health. During the conference, Scott and Horton stayed at the house of Thomas Bond, a Methodist physician who had helped care for the ill Joshua Soule. See Lucius C. Matlack, *The Memoir of Orange Scott*, 180-181.

[22] For a report of the convention, the *Christian Advocate and Journal* provided a detail account of the proceedings during the summer of 1840. Additionally, correspondent for the Zion's Herald, "E.S." wrote a series of letters that provide his perspective on the doings of the general conference.

[23] "General Conference Committees.," *Zion's Herald*, June 3, 1840, vol. 11, no. 23, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

[24] E.S., General Conference – Letter I.," *Zion's Herald*, May 13, 1840, vol. 11, no. 20, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian*

After Bangs presented his petitions, Scott offered two petitions of his own from New York City: one with 1100 signatures on temperance and another on slavery reportedly signed by over a thousand Methodists. When Scott broached the issue of slavery, the general conference engaged in what one delegate described as "Considerable discussion" over the creation and staffing of a committee on slavery with the delegates ultimately deciding that it would be composed of one representative from each conference with that member chosen by their annual conference's delegation. Scott was chosen by the New England Conference to serve on that committee.[25] Other abolition Methodists, including Joseph A. Merrill, Jotham Horton, A.D. Merrill, and Phineas Crandall, soon offered antislavery petitions of their own.[26] Petitions on slavery did not entirely dominate proceedings for the day, however. George Peck broached a subject which would have lingering consequences when he moved for the committee on temperance to reevaluate the church's position on "spirituous liquors." The day's proceedings came to an end shortly after noon with a motion from Scott. He called for a committee on preaching to offer Rev. Robert Newton, the representative of the Wesleyan Methodists in Britain, the opportunity to preach "as often as his health and convenience might permit." This motion, seconded by Bangs, carried with unanimous support "by a rising vote."[27]

Advocate and Journal, May 15, 1840, vol. 11, no. 39, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

[25] E.S., "General Conference – Letter I.," 2. "General Conference Committees.," *Zion's Herald*, June 3, 1840, vol. 11, no. 23, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

[26] "General Conference Committees.," *Zion's Herald*, June 3, 1840, vol. 11, no. 23, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). E.S., General Conference – Letter I.," 2. Crandall submitted a memorial which desired "a moderate Episcopacy" and Horton offered one that called for the annual conferences to elect presiding elders rather than have them be appointed by the presiding bishops.

[27] "General Conference Committees.," *Zion's Herald*, June 3, 1840, vol. 11, no. 23, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). E.S., General Conference – Letter I.," 2. E.S., "General Conference – Letter II.," *Zion's Herald*, May 13, 1840, vol. 11, no. 20, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). According to E.S., Newton moved the audience to tears during his preaching on Sunday, May 3. During the May 4 session, William Winans motioned for Newton to preach a sermon before the conference on May 6.

Slavery returned to the forefront of the general conference during a response to an address that Newton gave on May 5. *Zion's H*erald correspondent "E.S." observed that Newton, however, "approached [it] with great delicacy and caution," yet "gave a decided and firm expression of the opinions he entertained, and those of the connection he came to represent."[28] After Newton's remarks and other related business, Scott returned to the matter of petitions, offering more memorials from New York on temperance and slavery. He followed these memorials with several petitions from across New England: Lowell, Gill, Weymouth, Holliston, Greenfield, Nantucket, Charlestown, Charlemont in Massachusetts; Square Pond, Leyden, and Northfield in Connecticut; and Rochester, Vermont. Joseph A. Merrill also offered a petition from Springfield calling for "a moderate Episcopacy" while others such as Horton, Abraham D. Merrill, and Asa Abell of the Genesee Conference offered antislavery memorials. After this deluge of petitions, the conference adjourned its May 5 session.[29]

The next day, Bishop Robert Roberts appointed the committee that would reply to Newton. It included William Capers of South Carolina, John Dempster from the Black River Conference, and Peter Akers of the Illinois Conference. Business soon became consumed with the address from the bishops, a lengthy document that, once published in the *Christian Advocate*, took up nearly a full page. The theme of the bishop's address, which bore the names of all six bishops, was unity. Their central goal, they argued, was "to preserve the unity of peace" of the

[28] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 15, 1840, vol. 11, 39, 2-3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). During the May 4 session, Scott unsuccessfully moved for the conference to print the address and memorial from the board of managers of the Missionary Society. E.S., "General Conference – Letter II.," *Zion's Herald*, May 13, 1840, vol. 11, no. 20, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Newton argued that the Wesleyan Church of England and Ireland held slavery in "deepest abhorrence," offered sympathies for the difficulties posed by American slavery, and "respectfully suggested" that the American church "carry out the principles of the Discipline, ..."

[29] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 15, 1840, vol. 11, 39, 2-3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Horton's petitions and memorials came from his station in Lowell and Lunenberg, A.D. Merrill's petition came from Providence, Rhode Island, and Abell submitted a memorial on slavery from Middlebury, Vermont. All were referred to the committee on slavery.

church, and they later added that the only way "to preserve uniformity and harmony" was to "prevent conflict."[30] They explicitly linked this directive with slavery and abolition, and the bishops called for altering the General Rule on slavery in the Church Discipline so as to provide "a clear and definite opinion as a uniform guide...."[31] After this discussion of slavery and a deprecation of abolitionism, the bishops pivoted to their concerns about the challenges to church hierarchy and authority. At that juncture, they affirmed the authority of the bishops over general conferences and defended church government as it existed.[32]

The specific sections of this address, which touched most heavily on slavery, church government, education, and missions, were subsequently referred to the relevant committees. Scott then moved for 500 copies of the address to be published as a pamphlet before accepting a counterproposition to increase the number to 2000. Two days later, on May 8, Scott again presented a flurry of petitions from many of the same towns and cities across Massachusetts that called for a "moderate episcopacy" and suggested that annual conferences should select their own presiding elders. One delegate moved to lay the petitions on the table but failed and all the petitions were subsequently referred to the committee on episcopacy. Scott then tried to offer memorials from Lowell, Holliston, Square Pond, and Leyden endorsing the idea of a lay delegation to the conferences. That proposition, however, proved too extreme for the general

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[30] "Address of the Bishops.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 22, 1840, vol. 14, no. 40, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).
[31] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 5, 1840, vol. 14, no. 42, p. 1-3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Scott later tried to have this reply to Newton split into two halves: one dealing with slavery and another with everything else.
[32] "Address of the Bishops.," 1. The bishops said a bishop was not "a chairman or speaker" of the annual conference, but argued that "No annual conference has authority or right to make any rule of discipline for the Church, either within its bounds or elsewhere." The bishops appealed to authority and expertise, arguing that annual conferences – composed of the "young and inexperienced" – could not manage ecclesiastical affairs.

conference and it was laid on the table. Not all abolition Methodists approved of Scott's course, and their disagreement foreshadowed a rift within the antislavery wing of the church.[33]

During a discussion of ministerial appointments on the following day, Elijah Hedding interjected with a memorial that criticized two unnamed ministers from an unspecified annual conference, whom he deemed had been unjustly acquitted during a church trial. These two individuals were Orange Scott and La Roy Sunderland. More important, however, was Hedding's reasoning for resurrecting a nearly two-year old controversy. The general conference was his only recourse, and he argued that he did so not necessarily as an appeal but as a means of "inviting the General Conference to examine the acts of the annual conference in its premises." In other words, the New England Conference's defiance of a bishop and their support for Scott and Sunderland became a potential pretext for the church to strengthen episcopal power and reign in the annual conferences. The general conference quickly leapt into action. Nathan Bangs moved to create a new committee to deal with the matter and this committee was staffed by himself, W.H. Raper of the Ohio Conference, George Peck, John Dempster, and John Early of the Virginia Conference. That meant the committee would be composed of a decisive proslavery and anti-abolition majority.[34]

On May 9, twenty of the abolition Methodists at the general conference penned a short letter to the American Anti-Slavery Society, which was meeting at the same time in New York. While it said little that was new, it represented their continued interest in the national antislavery

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[33] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 15, 1840, vol. 11, 39, 2-3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). *Zion's Herald* correspondent "E.S." disliked that the petitions shifted from antislavery. "I am sorry they should come up" because "it goes to establish and confirm our opponents in the opinion that abolitionists are *schismatics, aiming at innovation and revolution!*" See E.S., "Letter III.," *Zion's Herald*, May 50, 1840, vol. 11, no. 21, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). According to E.S., Joshua Soule also made an "unexpected" appearance on May 8, "limping in a most pitiable manner at every step."

[34] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 15, 1840, vol. 11, 39, 2-3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

movement and illustrates their united opposition to the Garrisonian abolitionists. If the Garrisonians prevailed at the national meeting, the ministers called on "the true friends of *abolition proper*" to use whatever means were in their power to oppose them, even if it meant establishing "a new organization"[35]

After all the petitions and memorials had been presented to the general conference on May 11, Nathan Bangs rose to renew a motion he had briefly made on May 8. That motion had called for a committee of three to explore a potential revision of the Discipline to be in accordance with the bishop's address. He made his ambitions for the revision explicit in his May 11 resolutions. Because the Discipline was "obscure" and even "contradictory," a committee was needed to rectify the problem. John Early, however, became one of the first critics of Bangs' plan on the basis that he feared giving a committee too much power to modify the Discipline; Scott, surprisingly, offered little input other than endorsing a minor amendment about the type for a subsequent index to the Discipline. On the May 12 session, Scott scarcely participated in the proceedings of the general conference outside of a controversy over Daniel Dorchester. This quickly became a proxy conflict for the rival factions within the national church since it marked the intersection of slavery and church government.[36] While Scott hoped for the issue to be sent to the committee on itineracy, John Early and Stephen G. Roszel instead called for the matter to come before the entire conference. Elijah Hedding and Joshua Soule supported that view. Scott most notably objected when Dorchester attempted to quote extracts from the *Zion's Watchman*

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[35] "Letter from Twenty Ministers of the M.E. Church.," *Liberator*, May 22, 1840, vol. 10, no. 21, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022). Orange Scott and Jotham Horton were among the signers.

[36] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 22, 1840, vol. 14, no. 40, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). E.S., "Letter IV.," Zion's Herald, May 20, 1840, vol. 11, no. 21, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). The New England Conference had censured Dorchester in 1839 over his conduct while managing quarterly meetings. Scott emerged as the leading voice on the other side. In his view, Dorchester, had abused his power by abruptly ending a quarterly meeting. This appeal continued through the morning and afternoon sessions of May 12.

as part of his defense, an objection that led Phineas Crandall to publicly criticize him. Once Dorchester finished his speech, Scott immediately rose to deliver a rebuttal. In this speech, Scott underscored that he disagreed with the notion that conference rights were "altogether distinct and abstract from abolitionism," adding that he believed that annual conferences had the right to regulate their own affairs.[37] The Dorchester issue carried into the May 13 session, with Dorchester's counsel offering a direct rejoinder to Scott's speech. This speech immediately addressed the central issue at stake – was Orange Scott's view respecting quarterly conferences correct? – and argued that the people did not have authority to dictate business at those meetings. After this speech, several delegates offered resolutions – including Scott, Bangs, Roszell, and Winans – dealing with the Dorchester appeal and specifically with "the extent of ground which should be covered." Ultimately, the resolution that passed called for a simple reversal of the New England Conference's censure of Dorchester; it carried overwhelmingly by a vote of 120-17.[38]

The ceneral conference, however, proceeded at a glacial pace. "I think I never saw in any conference, to the same extent, a disposition to *contest* every inch of ground," E.S. fumed to the *Zion's Herald* on May 14, adding that, "We have had *talking*, till many of us are heartily sick of it."[39] During the May 14 session, however, Scott and Capers clashed over potential revisions to the Discipline on slavery, with Capers wanting the word "or" to replace "and" and Scott wanting to keep the original wording. This seemingly subtle and unimportant distinction will be explored in greater detail later.[40]

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[37] The proceedings of the conference described Scott's speech as being "cool and argumentative." Joseph Merrill followed Scott and, like Crandall, affirmed his belief that the general conference should decide the matter.
[38] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2.
[39] E.S., "Letter IV.," *Zion's Herald*, May 20, 1840, vol. 11, no. 21, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).
[40] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2-3. This debate largely amounted to a question of whether a person needed to buy *and* sell human beings to violate the Church Discipline, or if they needed to buy *or* sell them. This matter became an impetus behind Scott's secession and will be explored later.

On May 16, the general conference introduced a matter that would prove deeply contentious and divisive: the issue of whether African American members of the church should be prohibited from testifying against white members in church trials. During a discussion of this issue, Roszel and Smith endorsed the prohibition. Just as he had been at Cincinanti, Roszel emerged as a prime mover. This discussion, which had originally been a parochial matter in the Missouri Conference, soon ballooned into a larger issue. Roszel first argued that "ecclesiastical tribunals of the Church could not, without endangering the Church, conflict with the laws of the state." Smith quickly endorsed Roszel's sentiment, and "vigorously" advocated it in his remarks.[41] Since no substantial action was taken on that subject at the time, both Roszel and Smith reintroduced it on Monday, May 18. The Roszel resolution allowed ecclesiastical authorities in slave states and territories the power to allow church trials to take place in accordance with state and territorial law. This resolution, then, encapsulated the fundamental debate over abolitionism since 1835: Scott's abolitionism stressing that church should reform the state where appropriate and his antagonists believing that the church should accept the dictates of the state. During the ensuing discussion, Horton illustrated this reality when he rose for the abolitionist side and presented the question at stake: "The first thing to be decided is, 'Whether a colored man is a man?'"[42] Roszel crystallized the key difference between these competing views of church and state in his reply. "The word of God," he began, "requires us to be subject to the powers that be;...."[43] Bangs, however, became a surprising critic of Roszel's resolution and

[41] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 29, 1840, vol. 14, no. 41, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

[42] Horton further asked, "Is color, the tinge of the skin, to be considered a disqualification? Why sir, on this ground, Josephine the empress, the wife of Napoleon, would have been excluded. No sir. I profess my readiness to reverence law; but I will not place the law of the nation above the law of God. When conscience is trespassed on, I must be disobedient."

[43] Roszel professed a "hatred" for slavery but admitted that however much he abhorred the institution he could not "trample on the laws of the land" and threaten "the prosperity of the Church...." When P.P. Sanford worried that the resolution implied that civil authorities could essentially dictate church policy, Roszel quickly explained that his

spoke against it because it could eventually lead to preventing the church from preaching to African Americans.[44] Ultimately, J.A. Collins proposed a narrower resolution to pacify the conflict over that question while accepting Roszel's premise. This passed 74-46.[45]

On May 19, Bishop Andrew created a committee to draft a pastoral address for the general conference and subsequently assigned George Peck, William Capers, and Leonidas L. Hamline of the Ohio Conference to it. Shortly thereafter, Scott again presented another pair of memorials: one from Economy, Indiana on slavery and another from Albany, New York on lay delegations. Both proposals were accepted and referred to their respective committees. Little business of note occurred for the remainder of the May 19 session. Similarly, May 20 and May 21 were consumed with the expulsion of James V. Potts by the Philadelphia Conference. On the latter of these two, Scott played a limited but noteworthy role. He saw the question of Potts as being connected with the Dorchester controversy and linked these two issues to larger considerations of the power of the bishops and the annual conferences. During the proceedings from May 21, Scott made this explicit by arguing that the general conference could not hear Potts' appeal because "no character is involved." This soon ballooned into a larger debate over

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resolution "was not intended" to say that. Sanford, however, was unconvinced and said it was "an explanation which did palpable violation to the plain sense of language." Roszel, embarrassed, immediately withdrew the portion of his resolution calling for church rules to align with civil law.

[44] Bangs, it should be noted, was a staunch advocate for missions and converting African Americans and Africans. He was the leader in pressuring the bishops to do more to support the church in Liberia. William A. Smith, however, took aim at what he considered "the doctrine which had been broached from New York." He mocked Horton and Bangs' objections as "a parcel of truisms" and specifically criticized Horton's belief that divine law was superior to human law. Smith, however, reserved his strongest criticisms for Bangs because he regarded Bangs' opposition as a betrayal: "Had the doctrine ... been the offspring of New-England, or New-Hampshire, or Maine conference, we should have known it at once, ..., but coming from New-York, it could scarcely be recognized."

[45] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 22, 1840, vol. 14, no. 40, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). The issue of Black testimony stemmed from a case involving Silas Comfort in the Missouri Conference. Some Methodists saw the case as an opportunity to institutionalize a prohibition on Black testimony across the South. The specific language of Collins' resolution, however, somewhat favored the southern position since it said the conference's decision "is not intended to express the opinion that a colored man can be admitted as competent testimony against a white man in Church trials which may take place in slave holding states or territories." In essence, the Collins resolution implemented the Roszel resolution in a roundabout, less offensive manner.

church government when the committee on revisal offered its proposed changes to the Discipline on episcopal authority. The proposed changes included codifying the anti-abolition conduct of Elijah Hedding and Joshua Soule at various annual conferences during the latter half of the 1830s. They also included a provision that could have resulted in the election of conference presidents in the absence of bishops. That proposal garnered considerable opposition, especially from Roszel, who motioned to adjourn for the day and, when that failed, called to simply lay it on the table. This debate, however, gave way to the reports from other committees, including the ones on episcopacy, sabbath schools, and, eventually, slavery.[46]

As chairman of the committee on slavery, Bangs made the fateful report. This report included three resolutions: opposition to any changes to slavery in the United States, a belief that the general conference could not expand the Discipline on slavery, and a regret that annual conferences had advocated views on slavery contrary to the Discipline. Scott, however, immediately rose after Bangs finished speaking to inform the general conference that the committee's minority had drafted their own report. Scott's request to read it divided delegates. Samuel Luckey of the New York Conference "admonished" Scott and feared it would set "a bad precedent," while Bangs adopted a slightly more conciliatory stance that supported the reading of Scott's resolutions but laying them on the table. Roszel objected to any reading of them, while J.A. Collins felt that "fair play required it." William Winans, similarly, supported reading Scott's resolution. Scott, however, largely let the debate play out.[47] The general conference soon turned its attention to Bangs' resolution against antislavery agitation, and, on the cusp of its adoption,

[46] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2.
[47] Bangs changed his tune on reading Scott's minority report when the argument shifted to minority rights, which he worried would make ecclesiastical matters act in "a strict conformity" with civil legislation. Ultimately, the motion to lay Scott's report on the table prevailed by a narrow margin of 59-52.

Scott rose again to deliver an address against it. In the middle of Scott's speech, the general conference motioned to adjourn.[48]

Scott was given the opportunity to finish his speech the next morning on May 22, which turned to the question of petitioning. He addressed a criticism from delegates that his many antislavery petitions had included the signatures of women. In reply, Scott referenced the sentiment that a woman was worth seven and a half men in moral matters. He then calculated that this meant the number of petitioners amounted to 37,500 signers instead of the 10,000 he had acquired. And once again, he turned to the British Methodism of John Wesley and Thomas Watson to support his belief that the primitive and pure version of their church opposed slavery. His overarching thesis held that the only way to secure the "harmony" within the Church was to listen to the complaints of the people and adopt "a simple re-affirmation of a rule which had been once established, ..."[49]

Roszel rose after Scott's speech to call for an immediate vote on Bangs' resolutions; Bangs, however, instead opted to reply directly to Scott. Like Hedding and others whom Scott had clashed with through the years, Bangs reaffirmed the anti-abolition Methodist position that slavery's morality relied on circumstances rather than any absolute standard.[50] During the May 23 session, Bangs resurrected the debate by protesting Scott's memorials on slavery, calling them "a foul imposition and premediated fraud" because they included forged names, African Americans, children, and prison inmates. Smith immediately rose to support Bangs, expressing

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[48] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2. The *Massachusetts Abolitionist* included a sketch of Scott's speech on the minority report. See "Methodist General Conference.," *Free American*, June 11, 1840, vol. 2, no. 17, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).
[49] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2-3. Scott's speech was described by the recording secretary as "dispassionate and conciliatory, and his whole address free from offensive or inflammatory epithets. He was heard with the greatest respect and attention of the whole body, by a very large audience, which had convened to listen the debate on this theme. The gallery was filled with ladies."
[50] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2.

his shock at “disclosures this morning of the most stunning and astounding nature” that he feared were evidence that Scott was “morally dead!”[51] Furthermore, Smith saw the problems with the New York petitions as an opportunity to say that the New England petitions should be similarly discarded. Scott, however, defended himself by arguing that he had received the petition while passing through New York on his way to Baltimore. He then defended the New England petitions by arguing that he could personally vouch for the signatories. However, the petitions that called for a moderate episcopacy, the election of presiding elders, and lay delegates met a similar end to the New York antislavery memorials. William Winans, as chairman of the committee on lay delegation, issued a report on May 25 that argued that all these petitions were the result of “a concerted operation, under the direction of some *single* intellect” that could therefore be discarded since they were not a “spontaneous expression.” Regardless of whether Winans viewed Scott as the mastermind, Scott certainly believed he was the target and immediately suggested Winans’ entire report be laid on the table.[52]

Scott later reemerged during the general conference’s deliberations to speak on the question of whether the conference should form a new annual conference for Rhode Island and parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut. This decision prevailed 76-49. In his brief remarks on the subject, Scott offered insight into his views respecting rival theologies to Methodism. He felt that Methodism in New England faced a unique challenge. It was torn between two rival extremes: “this heartless system” of Calvinism on one hand and the religion of Unitarianism on

[51] Bangs published the complete report condemning Scott’s New York memorials during the morning session of May 27. Bangs stopped short of dismissing all Scott’s petitions as William A. Smith had hoped, arguing instead that delegate petitions should be confined to the people within the boundaries of a specific annual conference.
[52] “General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.,” *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 5, 1840, vol. 14, no. 42, p. 1-2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Jotham Horton, by contrast, asked Robert Newton a series of questions intended to get him to support their views on church government.

the other.[53] This offers insight into Scott's general theological approach in 1840. He fundamentally saw Methodism as the moderate middle between the erroneous extremes of Calvinism and more modern Christian theologies like Unitarianism and Universalism. This is also one of the few instances where Scott deliberately staked out a moderate position.

Although the issue of Black testimony reemerged on May 26, Scott did not participate in the discussions that took place that day. This renewed dispute culminated the next day at 7 pm with a vote on a resolution put forward by Ignatius Few of Georgia that considered it "inexpedient and unjustifiable" to allow Black testimony in slave states and territories. Roszel, Capers, Early, Smith, and southern Methodists voted in favor of it. However, the vote broke down along different lines than anything which had preceded it. Scott, Joseph Merrill, Jotham Horton, and Phineas Crandall all voted against it. But they were joined by a surprising contingent of allies: seven of the ten delegates from the New York Conference, including Nathan Bangs, voted with their abolition Methodist brethren. George Peck, Scott's critic from the Oneida Conference, also voted against the resolution. In the end, the final vote came down 69-69, which meant that it was laid on the table but remained "in full force."[54]

This vote over Black testimony, then, represented one of the first visible fractures within the anti-abolition and southern coalition that had dominated national Methodist church government since 1836. Foreshadowing the dissension between these two factions, Smith leapt to the defense of Scott on one occasion as an opportunity to criticize his longtime northern allies. "If you hold slavery to be a moral evil, hands off that brother [Scott]," Smith reportedly said to Bangs, adding that "The South will never be satisfied by your passing resolutions against Orange

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[53] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2. Scott noted that he had sold $6000 worth of books to the people of Providence in the span of a few years.
[54] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 3.

Scott & Co., while you hold the same doctrines he contends for."[55] The vote on Black testimony did not, however, mean that Bangs and his supporters had become abolitionists. To the contrary, Bangs continued to attack Scott and press new resolutions against abolitionism. Scott's error-laden New York memorials had been a grave unforced error which furnished Bangs with the pretext he needed to propose a series of resolutions that solidified the course of the church from 1836-1840. These resolutions argued it was "incompatible" for a minister to be an abolitionist except for when expressing "individual opinions on proper occasions in temperate language" and condemned those who agitated on slavery within the church through religious antislavery societies. Bangs further supported giving bishops, presiding elders, and all ecclesiastical authorities the authority "to banish the above practices from among us."[56]

The difficulties for the abolition Methodists continued over the next few days. William Winans furnished the committee on episcopacy's report, which greatly expanded episcopal power. On the question of bishops and presiding elders, Winans argued that they should hold authority over annual conferences and quarterly meetings. He further resolved that the members of those conferences and meetings had no right to decide the business at hand and gave the authority of introducing new material to the presiding bishop or elder.[57] Scott had long contended that the issue of slavery was connected to what he saw as the ecclesiastical usurpation of power. On June 2, Winans seemingly validated those concerns. Speaking on behalf of the committee of itineracy, Winans read a deeply polemical report that excoriated the New

[55] William A. Smith, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 174-175. Matlack's secondhand account is corroborated by similar recollections in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, which based its information on the *Zion's Watchman*. See "The Methodist General Conference.," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, June 4, 1840, vol. 6, no. 39, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).
[56] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," 2. This resolution was laid on the table for the time being, as other committees issued their reports.
[57] This later became an issue during the June 3 session, with Scott successfully securing the passage of a narrow resolution that afforded dissenting conferences with redress if they believed a presiding bishop or elder had exceeded their authority. This resolution carried with a 59-48 vote.

Hampshire and New England conferences. He reserved his strongest rhetoric for the latter, which he argued had, since 1836, "pursued a course destructive to the peace, harmony and unity of the Church." The report also argued that the annual conference had largely done that by enabling Orange Scott.[58]

The General Conference adjourned at 1:10 pm on Thursday, June 4 and, with few exceptions, had been a decisive defeat for the abolition Methodists and critics of existing church government. One of the lone victories – the defeat of Winans' anti-New England Conference resolutions – only occurred because Elijah Hedding insisted anti-abolitionists had already won. The general conference ended with a provision that barred Black Methodists from testifying in church trials against whites, a stronger series of anti-abolition resolutions, and modifications to the General Rule on slavery in the Church Discipline. The general conference had also reaffirmed the power of bishops and presiding elders to rule over annual conferences and quarterly meetings. While the proslavery and anti-abolition measures attracted the most attention from the press, Scott regarded them as symptoms of a larger problem. Garrison, however, used

[58] "General Conference. Proceedings of the General Conference.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, June 12, 1840, vol. 14, no. 43, p. 1-3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Winans gave six reasons, three of which dealt specifically with Orange Scott: the acquittal of Scott of his charges of falsehood from the Cincinnati Conference, the acquittal of Scott and La Roy Sunderland in 1838 on charges of "evil doing," and permitting Scott to neglect his "appropriate work" as a preacher and instead work as an antislavery agent. It is worth noting that Winans did not address the actions taken by either the New York or Baltimore annual conferences and how they had modified the General Rule on slavery. This issue came up later in the debate, however, with S.K. Hodges of the Georgia Conference justifying the conferences' conduct on the basis that they had done so defensively. While Jotham Horton tried to have the preamble struck from Winans' report, Scott said he was "indifferent" to that and challenged its facts: he had not been censured in Cincinnati. Elijah Hedding entered the debate to offer a qualified defense of the New England Conference as largely being composed "good men." He recommended the committee strike out everything related to that conference from their report. Hedding's argument, however, contained a degree of pragmatism: he argued that "the excitement in the north is diminishing" and that he worried extreme action could "revive it." William A. Smith seized on this, and pressed for action against the New England Conference since Hedding's only objections were "expediency." Smith's desire to preserve the language, however, failed and it was stricken from the report during the afternoon session on June 2. Winans begrudgingly acquiesced to this as a "'peace measure,'" which prevailed 63-62. Smith, however, was undeterred and unsuccessfully tried to reconsider the issue. Once the New England portion was removed, Winans' material carried with a much more comfortable 97-27.

the general conference as an opportunity to attack Scott as inconsistent and unprincipled.[59] Nevertheless, the conventional wisdom across the board regarded the general conference as an abject failure for the abolition Methodists. The *New York Herald*, for example, crowed that those Methodists "will soon be obliged to take a stand against the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, or resign their fanatical sentiments."[60] The *Advocate of Freedom* praised Scott for his "able defence of truth" but lamented that "truth is fallen in the streets."[61] An abolitionist from Fredericktown, Ohio, however, offered a different perspective. In a letter to Gamaliel Bailey for the *Philanthropist*, he surmised that the southern Methodists had overplayed their hand. He cited the general conference among a list of events that he felt had promoted "the

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[59] The *Liberator*, the *Massachusetts Abolitionist*, *Advocate of Freedom*, and the *Philanthropist* offered readers news about the general conference; they largely did this by republishing the *Zion's Watchman*. See "Methodist Conference.," *Liberator*, May 15, 1840, vol. 10, no. 20, p. 3 and "The Methodist Church.," *Liberator*, June 19, 1840, vol. 10, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals and "General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at Baltimore.," *Free American*, May 28, 1840, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 2 and "Methodist General Conference.," June 11, 1840, vol. 2, no. 17, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society; "Methodist Conference.," *Advocate of Freedom*, May 21, 1840, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 2, and June 4, 1840, vol. 3, no. 7, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022); and "Church and State.," *Philanthropist*, June 23, 1840, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022). On the issue of Black testimony, the *Liberator* took the opportunity to attack Scott despite his vote in favor of equal rights. This critique rested on the assumption that Scott opposed sitting in antislavery meetings with women and yet participated in a religious conference with slaveholders. After the conference, Garrison offered a scathing indictment of Scott and his abolition Methodists for staying in the church. "We hear nothing of secession from this corrupt, pro-slavery body, on the part of the twenty clergymen, whose consciences are too tender to allow them to act on the same platform with women," he fumed, adding that he would not state the clear "inference" from such "conduct" since doing so might be "deemed too severe." In another instance, Garrison mocked Scott's willingness to support a proslavery church "with all its corruptions." "We shall remember it," he promised. See "O, Consistency?," *Liberator*, June 5, 1840, vol. 10, no. 23, p. 3, and "Parties and Sects.," *Liberator*, June 26, 1840, vol. 10, no. 26, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Other sources, including the *Star in the West* and the *Olive Branch*, however, emphasized the question of church government. The *Olive Branch*, a Methodist Protestant publication, worried about the "very alarming resolutions" Bangs proposed on episcopal power while the *Star in the West* attacked the conference for disregarding the concerns of laity. See "General Conference at Baltimore.," *Olive Branch*, May 9, 1840, vol. 4, no. 43, p. 2 and "Methodist General Conference.," *Star in the West*, June 27, 1840, vol. 3, no. 11, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 1840).

[60] "Trouble among the Methodists.," *New York Herald*, October 29, 1840, p. 1, ProQuest, Civil War Era (accessed December 5, 1840). The *New York Herald* speculated – or wish cast – a future where Methodist ministers could be suspended for harboring abolitionist views or having "any connection" with [La Roy] Sunderland. If that "ultra measures" continued, the editorial insisted that new measures would need to be adopted which could excommunicate all "black bodies, black hands, and black hearts."

[61] "Methodist Conference.," *Advocate of Freedom*, June 4, 1840, vol. 3, no. 7, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022)

advancement of the cause" because of the way southern Methodists had acted during the proceedings. Although anti-abolitionists prevailed and got their way in the short term, he insisted that "This I think will open the eyes of the candid and reflecting portion of the community, and be the cause of promoting human liberty."[62] Similarly, Scott predicted his own defeat before the general conference had even met. He had already begun to suspect that a schism was unavoidable and felt the general conference would determine the contours of that split. On January 1, 1840, he wrote to Cyrus Prindle of that coming split, "There will either be a split between the North and South, or such measures will be adopted as will render it *inconvenient* and *inconsistent* for the abolitionists to remain in the Church, ..."[63]

Scott, however, did not have time to dwell on his defeat. While in New York, he had been elected as a vice president for the Massachusetts Abolition Society during their first annual meeting in late May.[64] By June 8, he was back in Lowell to prepare for the upcoming annual conference on July 1. Since Lowell would be hosting, the responsibilities for organization and logistics fell in part on Scott and Horton.[65] The annual conference, composed of 120 ministers,

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[62] A Subscriber, "A Letter from Frederictown.," *Philanthropist*, August 11, 1839, vol. 5, no. 19, p. 3., ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022). In particular, the writer cited "blasphemous" justifications for slavery and southern threats to destroy the church if they did not get their way.

[63] Orange Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 163-164. Matlack republished an extract from Scott's letter to Cyrus Prindle. For all intents and purposes, Scott concluded, "the Bishops and Presiding Elders are the annual and quarterly conferences."

[64] "Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Mass. Abolition Society.," F*ree American*, June 11, 1840, vol. 2, no. 17, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

[65] Jotham Horton and Orange Scott, "Notice.," *Zion's Herald*, June 10, 1840, vol. 11, no. 24, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022). Horton and Scott assured delegates that they would "make the best provision for the accommodation of the members which our circumstances will permit" but warned delegates and attendees to manage their expectations. Accommodations, they said, would be "limited" and the size of the conference meant that they would not be able to board everyone "free of expense." They also promised to help arrange for horse-keeping for traveling preachers but said they would need to pay for services. Both men expected that because the meeting would be the last one to include the newly created Providence Conference, it would be "a very full one." Horton and Scott coordinated with E.A. Rice to help provide "places of entertainment" for the preachers. It should also be noted that Scott donated $6.00 to the Massachusetts Abolition Society, which he provided to Luther Lee at some point during this time. Lee was in Boston on June 6. See *Free American or Massachusetts Abolitionist*, June 11, 1840, vol. 2, no. 17, p. 3, and Luther Lee, "Medford Erect.," June 18, 1840, vol. 2, no. 18, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

began at 9 am, with Elijah Hedding and Joshua Soule presiding. Much of the early business dealt with questions of establishing new theological seminaries, with the consensus favoring of an institution but disagreeing on "what character the institution would assume."[66] During the annual conference, Lucius Matlack made his exile to New England permanent, being admitted on trial as a preacher for the New England Conference. The greatest consequence of this meeting, however, was the way it planted the seeds of division among abolition Methodists. Scott found himself increasingly isolated from some of his own allies in the church over his insistence that they connect abolitionism with the reform of church government. At the New England Conference, he largely failed to advance these measures. "'Radicalism' has received little quarter in the doings of the Conference," a correspondent for the *Herald* observed, adding that "very little of that spirit pervades the body" because support for the "whole economy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was probably never so strong as at present."[67]

Scott did not serve on a single major committee during the conference, although some of his supporters – Horton, A.D. Sargent, and even Matlack – did. The annual conference also delved into a controversy with the New York Conference, once again over La Roy Sunderland. But Sunderland did not escape censure during this trial, with a majority voting that he had committed "immoral conduct." Scott and Horton expressed disappointment at the result, especially since "some 25 abolitionists voted for it."[68] The two men further lamented what they termed "this everlasting warfare of charges and trials." They were not alone. The *Olive Branch*, a

[66] J.M., "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, July 8, 1840, vol. 11, no. 28, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). Abel Stevens proposed establishing a new institution modeled after the theological school at Loxton, which he favored because it was "purely Methodistical" in its organization, it promoted the "great doctrine of Christian Perfection," and it had small class sizes. His resolution carried 53-30.
[67] J.M., "New England Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, July 22, 1840, vol. 11, no. 30, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).
[68] "New England Conference.," *Zion's Watchman*, July 25, 1840, vol. 5, no. 30, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). Both Scott and Horton linked these abolitionists with the bishops, arguing they voted "in the strongest fellowship with episcopacy, ..."

Methodist Protestant publication, sneered over Sunderland's conviction but lamented Scott's plight. In their view, Scott was the last hope for the Methodist Episcopal Church. The newspaper warned readers that if he was defeated then there would be no one left in the church "that will even dare to plead for the people's rights...."[69] Matlack himself considered the annual conference a failure because it censured leading abolitionists and would not even accept antislavery memorials. Appointments brought little change to the church. Scott and Horton returned to Lowell, Matlack was assigned to Holliston and Hopkinton, and Phineas Crandall was appointed presiding elder of the Worcester District; Ephraim Scott, however, was transferred to Bristol in the newly created Providence Conference.[70]

In mid-July, the Middlesex County Abolition Society nominated Scott to join a committee that the organization envisioned as promoting greater cooperation between abolitionists of different denominations.[71] Scott, however, remained focused on Methodism. Writing in August to the *Zion's Herald*, he expressed hope for "a general revival" at St. Paul's, recounting that he had converted about twenty people in the past week alone and informing readers that he would likely not attend the annual gathering at Millennium Grove since he intended to organize his own camp meeting in Lowell.[72] Hoping to reignite abolitionism within the church, Scott assumed the role as chairman of a committee to call for another Methodist

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[69] New England Conference and the Rev. La Roy Sunderland.," and "American Wesleyan Observer.," *Olive Branch*, July 18, 1840, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). The Methodist Protestant Church split from the Methodist Episcopal Church over church government. They generally criticized their former church, but were sympathetic to Scott, given that his opinions generally aligned with their own.
[70] Lucius C. Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 181-182. "Committees of the N.E. Conference.," and "Appointments of the N.E. Conference.," *Zion's Herald*, July 22, 1840, vol. 11, no. 30, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).
[71] "Middlesex County Abolition Society.," *Free American*, July 23, 1840, vol. 2, no. 23, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). This resolution described the committee as a committee of correspondence for "churches and ministry, of different denominations, in this country, to secure their more hearty and effectual co-operation and support in the cause of the slave."
[72] O. Scott, "St. Paul's Church.," *Zion's Herald*, August 5, 1840, vol. 11, no. 32, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).

Anti-Slavery Convention. Abolition may have brought antislavery Methodists together, but church government threatened to force them apart.

During the Lowell quarterly meeting at St. Paul's, the congregation voted with one dissenting vote to condemn the general conference and the annual conference. Phineas Crandall, the presiding elder over that district, allowed them to vote that way but added his own objection. Church government became a key issue that separated Scott from abolitionists like Crandall; they both agreed on slavery but their differences on church authority made cooperation between them increasingly difficult.[73] Even the Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention, which met in New York from October 6-8 in New York, achieved mixed results. Scott presided over the affair, but its measures were largely unsuccessful and the institutions it created failed to survive. What optimism that abolition Methodists felt during and after this convention required a complete circumvention of the church government question. By the final months of 1840, then, abolition Methodism struggled because it faced an identity crisis: was it a narrow, parochial movement focused exclusively on slavery, or was it something more? Matlack later lamented the "lethargic spirit" that crept into the movement, fearing it had "benumbed the energies of the abolitionists, in the Church, ..."[74]

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[73] P. Crandall, "Resolutions.," *Zion's Herald*, September 16, 1840, vol. 11, no. 38, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 5, 2022).

[74] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 181. Matlack later acknowledged the church government question as playing a role. The *Colored American* offered a favorable review of the convention. See "Methodist Convention.," *Colored American*, October 17, 1840, vol. 1, no. 33, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). The *Philanthropist* was also optimistic based on secondhand accounts. "The convention is highly spoken of," the paper recounted. See "Methodist Convention.," *Philanthropist*, October 28, 1840, no. 29, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). The convention, attended by some 200 delegates, resulted in the creation of a Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society. Orange Scott offered the first resolution after roll was called, urging Methodists to go the polls and vote. The Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society elected Cyrus Prindle, a Scott ally, as president, with Scott himself serving on the board of managers. La Roy Sunderland's review touted the "delightful spirit of harmony," although he admitted some discussions got "animated." Nevertheless, he argued that "It was the largest and best Convention we have ever had." See "American Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention.," *Advocate of Freedom*, November 12, 1840, vol. 3, no. 30, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 1840). The convention also engaged in missionary activities, but these ultimately failed and did not survive past a first year. "The Great Methodist Convention.," *Free*

Matlack's thesis, however, did not entirely account for the ways that simmering tensions over church government factored into this lethargy. That disagreement cannot be overlooked. Scott, convinced that the bishops and presiding elders were to blame for the setbacks that the abolitionists faced, began to question the very foundations of his religion. For other abolitionists, Phineas Crandall, John F. Adams, John Parker, and others, that was a bridge too far. Not only did these Methodists support episcopal government; they also held an optimistic view that the church could be reformed. Scott increasingly believed the opposite. In December 1842, Abel Stevens, then the anti-abolition editor of the *Zion's Herald*, aptly summarized the shift: "they turned the war from slavery to episcopacy, and the friends of the Church were compelled to leave them."[75] Two weeks later, on October 20, 1840, Scott hosted the quarterly meeting of the Middlesex County Abolition Society at St. Paul's and served on its five-person business committee.[76]

The division within the abolition Methodist ranks, however, proved to be a lasting consequence of the conferences and conventions of 1840. Nevertheless, abolition Methodists continued to look to Scott as a leader in the antislavery enterprise, even if his views on church government put him outside the mainstream. The Genesee Conference, for example, adopted resolutions to protest the Baltimore Conference's approach to African American testimony and referred them to Scott.[77] During that time, Scott was drafted as a Liberty Party write-in candidate

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American, November 19, 1840, vol. 2, no. 40, p. 1-2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

[75] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 182. John Parker, in a letter to La Roy Sunderland, embraced the opposite perspective. While he conceded that the bishops had tried to "destroy" abolitionism, he nevertheless believed that they had failed. He urged "all our brethren" who were "untainted with radicalism" to "remain in the Church" to reform it. See John Parker, "Progress of the Cause.," *Colored American*, July 10, 1841, vol. 2, no. 19, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

[76] Charles P. Johnson, "Middlesex County Abolition Society.," *Free American*, October 29, 1840, vol. 2, no. 37, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

[77] Methodists.," *Free American*, December 10, 1840, vol. 2, no. 43, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

for the Massachusetts 3rd Congressional District.[78] Meanwhile, Garrison, far from being a well-wisher of his fellow-travelers in the realm of political abolitionism, publicly hoped these third-party candidates failed.[79]

The overall disharmony within the abolition Methodists ranks was further compounded by the fact that Scott began to suffer from ill health during the latter half of the year. This ultimately forced him to resign his station at St. Paul's Church at the end of the year, with A.D. Merrill assuming his responsibilities. He then retired to Newbury, Vermont, where he and his family acquired a house and two acres of land.[80] Over the months that followed, rumors began to circulate among his critics that he had embezzled money from the American Anti-Slavery Society to pay for this house. These allegations grew loud enough that it forced Scott to directly respond to them in January 1842.[81] During this time, he increasingly withdrew from public life and turned his attention to private and personal matters. He was, nevertheless, healthy enough to keep himself busy with manual labor and, on occasion, enter controversies and attend public events. He offered his perspective on the theological seminary proposals put forward by Ralph

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[78] "Liberty Ticket.," *Free American*, October 22, 1840, vol. 2, no. 36, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Orange Scott was listed as the Liberty Party candidate for U.S. Representative. The only congressional seat they did not contest was John Quincy Adams'.

[79] "A Whig Abolitionist.," *Liberator*, October 2, 1840, vol. 10, no. 40, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). In reply to a correspondent who informed him he would vote Whig, Garrison told the writer that he was unprincipled and inconsistent. But rather than pointing him in the direction of Birney, Garrison openly called for his defeat. "We hope Messrs. [James] Birney and [Thomas] Earle will obtain a very small number of votes." He hoped that abolitionist voters would "scatter their votes" and receive as little political influence as possible.

[80] "Rev. O. Scott.," *New England Christian Advocate*, February 25, 1841, vol. 1, no. 8, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). The *Advocate* took issue with the *Zion's Herald's* characterization that Scott had retired to a simple farm. The *Liberator* also reported Scott's retirement in a brief news notification that informed readers of his request that they forward his letters to Newbury. See "Untitled.," *Liberator*, February 19, 1841, vol. 11, no. 8, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022)

[81] O. Scott, "Mr. Marr's Slanderous Report.," *New England Christian Advocate*, January 27, 1842, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). The allegations charged that Scott had used $10,000 out of the society funds to buy his property in Newbury, which Scott called "a base and malicious slander." Scott's defense provides a window into his income during this time. According to Scott, he received $900 a year while serving as stationed minister in Lowell – an $820 allowance and $80 for "marriage fees and perquisites" – and, while working as an antislavery agent from 1837-1838 and 1838-1839, he was paid about the same.

W. Allen and John F. Adams.[82] He supported Lowell Methodists in their effort to make Schuyler Hoes their stationed preacher during the summer and fall of 1841. He even attended the Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Worcester that July.[83] Scott, however, became increasingly pessimistic over the future of his church, and, for the first time, publicly suggested in February 1841 that the church could not be reformed on slavery.[84]

By July 1841, Orange Scott began to crystallize his views on church government and church action against slavery. As we have seen, he envisioned this as a simple matter of returning to ancient, primitive Methodism: reaffirming that slavery was a sin in all circumstances, that slaves were human beings with immortal souls, and that Methodists should pray for slavery's ultimate end. These questions, however, became more complicated during the 1830s as church government and episcopal power became greater considerations. His desire to purify the church, then, became tangled with his burgeoning desire to reform the very foundations of Episcopal Methodism. This led many abolition Methodists, especially those who agreed with Scott and Horton on church government, to increasingly disregard the authority of

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[82] O. Scott, "Theological Seminary.," *Zion's Herald*, February 3, 1841, vol. 12, no. 5, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). In this communication, Scott was adamant that the seminary be set up in Newbury and argued that that location had already been decided during their meeting at Nashua in September 1840.

[83] Lucius C. Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 187-193. Lucius Matlack includes several letters related to the controversy at St. Paul's. Essentially. A group of Lowell Methodists, including William North and Leonard Huntress, wanted a new preacher for St. Paul's and, when Joshua Soule and Elijah Hedding refused, they invited Scott to resume his preaching there for the month of July. These letters underscore Scott's importance to many Methodists in Lowell. When the bishops refused their request, they demanded their church have no appointment and told Scott "You can infer the rest." This controversy, however, carried into 1842. Given that Schuyler Hoes, the Lowell Methodists' original choice, was a stationed minister in Ithaca, New York, it suggests one of two things: either the Lowell Methodists wanted a minister who largely shared Scott's views or the community suggested Hoes to try and engineer Scott's return. "New-England Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society.," *Colored American*, July 31, 1841, vol. 2, no. 22, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). During this meeting, Scott proposed a resolution which said that "the blood of the dying slave" was on the "skirts" and "hands" of the "professed Christians and Christian ministers" who were "indifferent" to slavery. During his quasi-retirement, Scott also attended the New England Conference during the summer and served on the committee on slavery to draft a report for the conference. "Report of the New England Conference on Slavery.," *Zion's Herald*, July 14, 1841, vol. 12, no. 28, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 5, 2022).

[84] Lucius C. Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 184-186. In February 1841, Scott wrote to the *Zion's Herald* that he had "little hope that the church will ever be reformed in relation to slavery."

bishops and presiding elders. It partly explains why Lowell, and St. Paul's Church in particular, became a hotbed for anti-episcopal sentiment, as seen through that community's controversy over stationed ministers.

This was, in many respects, a movement among the lay members. Luther Lee, serving as editor of the *New England Christian Advocate*, a periodical founded in January by the Laymen's Wesleyan Association, reported in August that de facto secessions were organically beginning to take place in Lowell. In response to the refusal of the bishops to appoint the ministers they wanted, several Methodists left both St. Paul's and Wesley Chapel and instead went to worship at "the old meeting house." This, in part, stemmed from the fact that they privately and publicly wanted the church to assign them Orange Scott or someone like him. This exemplifies an important evolution that underscores how the debate over slavery had alienated many rank-and-file Methodists from church authorities. In 1830, when the church decided that Scott would not return to his Springfield station for a second year, his congregation was disappointed but submissive. When the bishops made a similar decision in Lowell in 1841, the congregation openly defied them. Lee made this paradigm shift explicit in an article on the subject, arguing that the bishops should expect defiance when they refused to "give them [the people] the right man."[85] In January 1842, Scott continued to support the Lowell churches from Newbury, writing that their continued success was proof they "have not committed an unpardonable sin in carrying out their determination to have some voice in who shall be their spiritual guides."[86]

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[85] "Methodistical Affairs in Lowell.," *New England Christian Advocate*, August 5, 1841, vol. 1, no. 31, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). *The New England Christian Advocate* was printed by Leonard Huntress, one of the men who corresponded with Scott and tried to secure his return to St. Paul's.
[86] O. Scott, "The Advocate.," *New England Christian Advocate,* January 20, 1842, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).

The church government crisis from 1838-1842, therefore, represented the convergence of three interconnected conflicts: bishops versus annual conferences, presiding elders versus quarterly meetings, and hierarchy versus laity. In each of these, Scott sided with what he considered to be popular will. His views on these subjects only hardened and became more extreme during this period of quasi-retirement from 1840 through 1842. At the end of July 1841, Scott wrote in support of some ideas that Cyrus Prindle had devised about potential "improvements" in the Methodist Episcopal Church. For Scott, the church needed to reform "*soon*" to address what he considered "a growing and wide-spread spirit of discontent" and felt they could only accomplish that by adopting a church structure which was "in accordance with republican and christian principles" that could "*equalize* responsibilities and rights...."[87]

Two weeks later, Scott wrote to the *New England Christian Advocate* again to explain why he adopted the label of "radical" in the wake of the controversies of 1841-1842. As seen from much of Scott's earlier debates, he understood radicalism less as a specific proscription of policies and more as a general state of mind. In 1841, he believed that radicalism simply meant "to go to the 'root,' which is the literal meaning of the word, ..." This radicalism, as he put it, simply meant "to walk up and *look the monster in the face*." In making an apology for his radicalism, he again returned to his belief that radicalism and conservatism were intrinsically linked. "I am not perhaps quite so radical as JOHN WESLEY," he wrote, underscoring his belief that radicalism did not entail a destruction of the old; it could often mean restoring the idyllic past from a corrupted present.[88] For Scott, the church from 1800 to 1820 represented the purer

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[87] O. Scott, "'Proposed Improvement.,'" *New England Christian Advocate*, August 5, 1841, vol. 1, no., 31, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).
[88] Scott proceeded to list several historical examples which he described as "radical." These examples dealt specifically with matters of church government and offered him the opportunity to show historical precedent for measures like the election of presiding elders.

ideals of a Methodism that harmonized episcopal authority with popular consent; this changed during "the scenes of 1820 to 1832" when "tyranny has triumphed – and oppression has struck its roots deep in the church!" Even on the issue of church government, then, the Methodist Episcopal Church had fallen from the model society. Moreover, Scott's radicalism was tempered by his conservative sensibilities, and his Burkean impulse for "modifications and improvements" rather than "the destruction of the episcopacy" or "a complete revolution in our form of church government." Although Scott believed a conservative approach could save the church, he nevertheless expressed "little hope" that such a change would ever happen.[89]

Although these questions became central considerations for Scott that defined his legacy, they did not wholly consume his public or religious life. He still retained his lifelong interest in conversion and evangelical revivalism. On the same day that he penned an explanation of his radicalism, he attended a meeting for the Board of Trustees for the Newbury Seminary and, alongside Solomon Sias and Timothy Morse, announced that the arrangements for a new theology department at the seminary had been finalized and would be ready at the start of the fall semester on August 26.[90] This measure represented the culmination of Scott's work to build and establish a theological institution that could help train the next generation of ministers and service the people of his native Vermont.

That November, Scott again wrote to the *New England Christian Advocate* to discuss his views on the American Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Missionary Society that had been formed earlier that year. He had always had an interest in missionary work but had long lamented the

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[89] O. Scott, "My Radicalism.," *New England Christian Advocate*, August 19, 1841, vol. 1, no. 33, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). The potential exception to this was, by Scott's admission, a belief that "I am in favor of giving our lay brethren a voice in the lay-making, or rule-making body of the church." Scott conceded that this "reform" as he put it should be gradual rather than sudden and "be a work of time."
[90] Solomon Sias, O. Scott, Timo. Morse, "Theological School.," *New England Christian Advocate*, August 19, 1841, vol. 1, no. 33, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).

connection between missionary societies and slavery and racism.[91] His hope was that with an explicitly antislavery alternative could ensure that "a Methodist abolitionist would no sooner be seen putting his contributions with the 'blood money,'" that had characterized older missionary organizations. For Scott, this was a crucial juncture; it represented a crossing of the Rubicon. He then proposed three possible destinations for missionaries: "among the fugitives in Canada, at Mendi in Africa, and in Palestine." He finalized his communication on missions by pledging fifty dollars to make his five living children – Charles Wesley, Caroline Fletcher, Laura McGaffy, Amey Eliza, and Susannah Wesley – life members of the organization.[92]

During his quasi-retirement, Scott partially deferred to other abolition Methodists. In January 1842, for example, he openly endorsed two of his strongest supporters: William H. Brewster and Jotham Horton, encouraging the former to continue writing on theology and the latter to pen articles on what he termed "*true church polity*."[93] During this time, Scott turned

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[91] Orange Scott, *Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1838), HeinOnline, p. 24. Scott had long connected colonization with racism, but he had also done so with general missionary work too. In one of case, he excoriated slaveholders who willed their slaves to help the Missionary Society pay off its debts. "O what heathenism is such conduct!" he fumed. He acknowledged that the society refused this gift but still criticized them for having owned slaves "in several instances."

[92] O. Scott, "American Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Missionary Society.," *New England Christian Advocate*, November 25, 1841, vol. 1, no. 47, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). Scott did not make himself or his wife members because a person had already gifted the two of them lifetime memberships. Next January, Scott commended the society for continuing to gain a place in "the public mind." O. Scott, "The Advocate.," *New England Christian Advocate*, January 20, 1842, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).

[93] O. Scott, "The Advocate.," *New England Christian Advocate*, January 20, 1842, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). For an example of a Horton article on church government, see J. Horton, "Ecclesiastical Polity.," *New England Christian Advocate*, November 25, 1841, vol. 1, no. 47, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). Horton, like Scott, argued for a return to a "primitive" model that he characterized in the form of a question: "What was the form of government which the apostles left to the church?" Horton argued for the rights of laity through "the representative principle." Another article can be found on January 13, 1842. See J. Horton, "Ecclesiastical Polity.," *New England Christian Advocate*, January 13, 1842, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 8, 2022). Brewster, it should be noted, wrote an article just as Scott suggested on February 10, 1842 about the second coming of Jesus Christ. See Wm. H. Brewster, "Coming of Christ in 1843 – The Little Horn of Daniel, Chap. VIII. &c.," *New England Christian Advocate*, February 10, 1842, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 4, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). Brewster's article criticized those who believed Jesus would return in 1843. Scott later entered this fray on his own in the February 24, 1842 number of the *Advocate*, which similarly criticized the belief that the millennium would come in 1843. See O. Scott, "The Millennium.," *New England Christian Advocate*, February 24, 1842, vol. 2, no. 8, p. 4, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).

inward and engaged in personal reflection over how he had acted in previous controversies. This period of introspection led him to the conclusion that his rhetoric had often been unduly harsh and severe. This did not, however, entail a change in principle. Scott never rejected his beliefs, only the way he had conveyed them. One of the first public records of this change came at the beginning of 1842, when Scott replied to an article from "Melanchthon" about Methodist missionary G.S. Brown, who had engaged in violent conflict with African natives. Labeling Brown a "buckshot missionary," Melanchthon excoriated him as a "Reverend butcher" and "this bloody missionary," employing the same rhetoric that William Lloyd Garrison had used against critics of non-resistance by considering him to be a hypocritical minister of the peaceful Jesus.[94]

Scott rejected Melanchthon's epithets because they "have no tendency to convince any man's judgment." "I am no milk-and-water man, as it respects strong language," he began before adding, "but there is a point beyond which I cannot go." That line of demarcation was impugning the motives of a fellow Christian. Scott also adopted a position that put him at odds with the more Garrisonian interpretation: it was entirely possible that Brown had acted in self-defense. He made this explicit in his reply: "To say that no man has the right to self-defence, in any case whatsoever, is to take the Garrison ground of non-resistance."[95] This episode not only underscores that Scott had become increasingly cognizant of the drawbacks to harsh rhetoric; it illustrates that a kernel of Garrisonianism had leapt from the antislavery movement into abolition Methodism. This problem would not end with Melanchthon. But Scott's rebuke is illustrative because it remained largely concerned with language. He did not reject Melanchthon's

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[94] Melanchthon, "The 'Buckshot' Missionary.," *New England Christian Advocate*, January 6, 1842, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 1, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 8, 2022).

[95] O. Scott, "'The Buckshot Missionary.,'" *New England Christian Advocate*, January 20, 1842, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 3, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022). Scott criticized the writer for writing under the moniker of the "*amiable*" Melanchthon, an early Protestant reformer.

conclusions; he did not excuse Brown's account of the conflict, arguing that he could and should be criticized for his conduct.[96]

Similarly, Scott opened 1842 by penning another article which voiced regret with how he had handled some of the more recent elements of the Lowell controversy, believing that he had allowed "*the impulse of the moment*" dictate his actions and writings. This again pertained to language rather than content. "All I have said, at any time, on the *abstract question* of the powers of the bishops and the rights of the laity, *remains as it was*," he insisted, while admitting he may have been "wrong" in how he went about promoting his views. He most succinctly expressed this change near the end of his ruminations:

> I will only add, that if I have sometimes said things unadvisedly and without proper reflection, I believe that even my opponents will accord to me the merit of thinking and speaking independently of the opinions of others. Those trimmers who always balance every thing before speaking, so as to be sure and get on the popular side, may well proceed with caution. It scarcely enters into my thoughts to inquire, whether an opinion will be popular before uttering it. The only inquires suggested are, is it true? and ought it to be known? And while I hope and pray that I may never be trammelled with a popularity-seeking spirit, it is my desire and intention, to be a little more cautious in the future....[97]

This "opportunity for reflection" gave way to Scott doing so in the realm of slavery and abolition. In a letter to the *Zion's Herald* that was eagerly picked up by the *Christian Reflector* and the *Liberator*, Scott's musings followed a similar format to the Lowell controversy.

Just as he had done on other subjects, Scott distinguished between his "principles and general measures" – which he said had "undergone no change" – and what he termed "the best

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[96] Scott, "'The Buckshot Missionary.,'" 3. Scott wrote, in part, "it was certainly wrong to indulge, as he seems to have done, in a spirit of exultation in giving a description of the scene." He ultimately came to a similar conclusion as Melanchthon but did so in a far less incendiary manner. Scott reasoned if Brown had acted in self-defense, his account would not have been as blasé with a "want of feeling" and would have instead discussed "the subject with modesty, deep feeling, and sincere regret, that the occasion seemed to require the sacrifice of *human life*!"
[97] O. Scott, "Explanations and Retractions.," *New England Christian Advocate*, February 10, 1842, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 4, American Antiquarian Society (accessed December 7, 2022).

mode of conducting the great controversy....” He continued by confessing that he was a person of “ardent temperament” that made him “exceedingly liable to overact, and not always to exercise sufficient caution, and prudence in the manner of debate.” In the end, he concluded that “I might have managed my part of the controversy more judiciously and profitably” and expressed his “regret that the debate on both sides assumed, at so early a period, so hostile a character; and that I contributed my full quota to such a result.” During this time, Scott also reached out to many of the individuals he had debated over the years inside the Methodist Episcopal Church to apologize to them for those instances where he had “been severe and personal.”[98] Reactions were mixed. The *Christian Reflector* praised his “kind and conciliatory temper” and likened Scott’s newfangled approach to British abolitionists Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce.[99] A correspondent for the *Liberator*, however, was far less charitable. “This letter [Orange Scott’s] I consider pro-slavery,” the writer fumed, adding that it was proof that Scott had betrayed the movement and lacked the “moral courage” to oppose slavery.[100] A member of the Methodist laity wrote to Scott at this same time to express similiar concerns, telling Scott, “The more sagacious and talkative among them think you have lowered down your standard, and abandoned your once glorious position, and yielded to the church powers,....”[101] Scott, however, had simply called for moderation in tone; he explicitly reaffirmed his principles and policies. But his

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[98] Orange Scott, quoted in “Interesting Statement.,” *Christian Reflector*, June 22, 1842, vol. 5, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 8, 2022). Scott clarified that he had not changed on “the inherent sinfulness of slavery, and the duty of immediate emancipation,” as well as “the duty of the free States, touching moral and political action, ...” Even when issuing private apologies, Scott insisted that “so far as I have stood forth on great principles, I have made no retraction whatever, neither can I. With a bold uncompromising advocacy of these, I stand or fall.”
[99] “Interesting Statement.,” *Christian Reflector*, June 22, 1842, vol. 5, no. 25, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 8, 2022).
[100] B., “The Christian Reflector.,” *Liberator*, July 8, 1842, vol. 12, no. 27, p. 1, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 8, 2022). The *Reflector* replied by noting, “Our friend Scott will be amused, we think, with the information that he has become pro-slavery.” See “Our Principles.,” *Christian Reflector*, July 13, 1842, vol. 5, no. 28, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed December 8, 2022).
[101] Quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 197-198. The person is unidentified but described as “A layman of distinguished ability” and one of “the influences surrounding Mr. Scott at this time.”

ruminations further represented his hope to transition away from the personal controversies that had previously characterized his life.

J.D. Bridge accurately summarized the reason Scott had tended towards polemics and harsh, Garrisonian rhetoric before his retirement. Even as he admired Scott, Bridge felt this made him ill-suited to lead the abolition Methodists. Acknowledging that that Scott "will never do for a leader," Bridge argued that he felt him "too sanguine, too confident, too harsh in his language – and not always prudent." But he also admitted that Scott's penchant for controversy stemmed from his "noble, generous working spirit, which lives in *advance* of one-half the world; ...." In Bridge's telling, then, Scott acted with a complete confidence in his moral convictions. Scott's mistake, according to Bridge, was that he believed that others were just as eager and ready to accept reform. All his mistakes had flowed from that assumption. This characterization aligns with the historical record. Two of Scott's greatest miscalculations – his belief in 1835-1836 that the church was ready to act against slavery and his belief that Garrisonian non-resistance was a minority opinion – rested on his belief that people overwhelmingly shared his views. Yet even as he criticized Scott, Bridge refused to say that Scott had been wrong in the struggle over slavery. Instead, he insisted that if "one [person] might have done as well or better, a thousand would have done worse."[102]

1841 and 1842 proved to be difficult years for Orange Scott. His reflections were a source of despair rather than relief because he believed his mistakes had doomed abolition Methodism. Even as his private and public apologies helped him make amends for some his personal shortcomings, the struggles that his movement faced remained unresolved. During these retirement years, Scott reached out to four of his most trusted allies: Seth Sprague, Jr., Jotham

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[102] J.D. Bridge, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Orange Scott*, 182-183. Bridge made these remarks in March 1841, early in Scott's retirement.

Horton, La Roy Sunderland, and Cyrus Prindle.[103] He felt that he and his fellow abolition Methodists had to make a final decision: accept the existing status quo on slavery and church government or leave the Methodist Episcopal Church. In a letter to Prindle in September 1841, Scott wrote that he was "*almost*" decided on the question of leaving and cited the church's treatment of St. Paul's and Wesley Chapel as the immediate cause. A peaceful resolution to the Lowell controversy, however, scuttled his plans.[104] Scott, however, was undeterred. He made his intentions public on June 15, 1842, writing for the *Zion's Herald* that Methodists could either "submit to things pretty much as they are, or secede."[105]

Eventually, on September 27, 1842, Scott wrote to Prindle to tell him that, after having "hesitated and hesitated," he was "at last fully decided" on leaving the Methodist Episcopal Church. In consequence of his discussions with Horton and Sunderland, Scott informed Prindle that they not only planned to withdraw; they intended to establish a new church. "Are you prepared, in the name of our heavenly Master, to stand fort for a new anti-slavery, anti-intemperance, anti-every-thing wrong, church organization," he asked.[106]

Six days later, Scott wrote a confidential letter to a friend, explaining that he could no longer "hold my *peace*," nor wait for another general conference to set things right.[107] Then on November 2 and 3, 1842, Scott, Horton, and Prindle held a meeting in Albany to finalize their

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[103] Lucius Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 195-202. Matlack compiled several of letters and published these in his biography of Scott, which he derived from reviewing Scott's personal correspondence. Given that many letters from Scott have not survived, this remains one of the best sources for this information. Although Sunderland is not named by Matlack, one of the letters Matlack preserved included a reference to "S.," shortly after mentioning the *Zion's Watchman*, making it likely this is Sunderland.
[104] Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 199. Scott said he opposed the efforts against the "beloved brethren" of Lowell, but qualified he was still reluctant to leave or take a "hasty step." He then consulted with Prindle. Upon hearing that the situation in Lowell had been resolved, Scott retracted his threat.
[105] Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott,* 186.
[106] Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 202.
[107] Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 205. The letter is addressed to a "Bro. B.," along with a synopsis of the reply as well as a selection from Scott's response on October 28. In the latter of these, Scott expected he would only bring "few" with him and suspected that even "my old and tried friends such as J.D.B. [J.D. Bridges] will turn against me and my revolutionary movements."

secession.[108] After the attendees, which included ministers and laity, made the decision to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church, Scott, Horton, and La Roy Sunderland were tasked with issuing a declaration that explained the secession and establishing a newspaper. Five days after the convention ended, on November 8, 1842, Scott, Horton, and Sunderland met in Providence to draft their formal declaration of secession.

This announcement of withdrawal, which amounted to nearly four columns of the *True Wesleyan's* maiden number, expressed and explained their reasons for leaving the church. The two central justifications were: "1. The M.E. Church, is not only a slave-holding, but a *slavery defending* church. 2. The Government of the M.E. Church contains principles not laid down in Scriptures,...." In exploring these points, the three ministers reiterated many of the sentiments and beliefs with respect to both subjects that they had articulated over the eight prior years but structured the list of grievances on slavery like the American Declaration of Independence. Their complaints simply replaced "He has" with "She has." Regarding church government, they argued for the rights of the laity and against "the power conferred upon the bishops of the M.E. Church" in a variety of areas, including the ability to assign preachers, oversee annual conferences, and lifetime appointments. Yet it is important to emphasize that this declaration did not merely confine itself to saying what Scott, Horton, and Sunderland opposed. In the closing paragraphs, they pivoted to explain what they stood for. "We do not withdraw from anything essential to *pure Wesleyan Methodism*," they wrote, "We only dissolve our connection with Episcopacy and Slavery. These we believe to be anti-Scriptural, and well calculated to sustain each other."[109]

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[108] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 202-203.

[109] Jotham Horton, Orange Scott, LaRoy Sunderland, "Withdrawal from the M.E. Church.," *True Wesleyan*, January 7, 1843, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). This statement, coupled with a subsequent qualifier that "There are many valuable things in the economy of methodism;" should be understood as a limiting principle for the secession. Scott, Horton, and Sunderland were confining their separation to the "episcopal" part of Episcopal Methodism and replacing it with the form of Methodism they believed to be purer and more primitive: Wesleyan Methodism.

With secession a reality, Scott turned his attention toward helping turn the movement into a denomination. The seceders planned to hold two meetings during the first months of the year that would make that a reality: a meeting at Andover, Massachusetts on February 1, and then a general convention in Utica, New York on May 31.[110] In the months preceding these gatherings, Scott focused on establishing the newspaper that could serve as that eventual denomination's unofficial organ. Thus, the *True Wesleyan* was born.

This weekly periodical was originally published out Lowell every Saturday at a cost of $2 per year, with Scott and Horton serving initially as joint editors and proprietors of the publication. Eventually, Scott assumed complete ownership and principal editorial duties. Nevertheless, the paper advocated the core values and worldview of Scottite Methodism; on its masthead was the paper's motto, a favorite Bible verse of Scott's: "First Pure, then Peaceable."[111] "Their motto is a fair illustration of their characters," the *Philanthropist* wrote in a favorable review of Scott and Horton's work.[112] In this opening number of the *True Wesleyan*, Scott and Horton offered insight into why they had chosen to secede and their subsequent plan of action. They offered this in minute detail, going so far as to explain the reasoning behind why they had chosen to identify as Wesleyan Methodists. "As we are still *Methodists* in doctrine, and as we are with the venerable Wesley in his views of slavery, we have taken the name of *Wesleyan Methodists*," they wrote. They further provided a broad sketch of what this new church would look like: it would affirm the Bible as "the only rule and sufficient rule both of faith and

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[110] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 210.

[111] The *True Wesleyan's* prospectus borrowed from the *American Wesleyan Observer*. See "Our Course.," *True Wesleyan* January 7, 1843, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott also promoted the *True Wesleyan* as the only Methodist paper that would allow open discussion of "the principles of Episcopal Church Government...." From January 14, 1843 through November 1844, the newspaper was published in Boston at No. 66 Cornhall by John B. Hall. Editor office hours were from 9-12am and 2-5pm.

[112] "Important Movement.," *Philanthropist*, December 11, 1842, vol. 7, no. 16, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022).

practice," the election of presidents for the annual and general conferences, and stronger general rules against slavery and drinking. Because of the absence of presiding elders and bishops, the new government marked a significant departure from the old church. Yet in other areas, especially the way day-to-day affairs were administered, it largely stuck to its Methodist Episcopal roots. Scott and Horton were keenly aware that they remained Methodists even after secession. "It will be seen that we propose to adopt a plan of church government between Episcopacy and Congregationalism," they wrote.[113] Methodism, primitive, Wesleyan Methodism, was the middle ground between those two extremes.

Between 1843 and 1844, Orange Scott played an integral role in the formation and growth of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection through the Utica Convention and the management of the *True Wesleyan*. At Utica, Scott presided over the convention that formally established the Wesleyan Methodist Connection and therefore acted as the church's first president. This chapter, however, will prioritize Scott's tenure as editor of the *True Wesleyan*, paying particular attention to the way that he covered slavery. This underscores the continued relationship between abolitionism and Wesleyanism even after the formal break with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Under his nearly two-year tenure as editor, Scott turned the *True Wesleyan* into an antislavery and anti-episcopal platform.

By January 21, 1843, three weeks into its publication, Scott emerged as the sole proprietor and primary editor of the *True Wesleyan*, with Jotham Horton and Luther Lee serving as assistant editors. Both Horton and Lee furnished considerable written material for the paper, but Scott retained his position as editor through November 1844. During this time, Scott commuted from Newbury, Vermont, where his family still lived, to the newspaper's offices in

[113] "What is Your Plan?," *True Wesleyan*, January 7, 1843, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Boston. Scott's editorship and ownership also faced the challenge of merging La Roy Sunderland's *Zion's Watchman* into the publication, a task which proved fraught with logistical challenges.[114]

As a periodic publication which Scott managed for nearly two years, the *True Wesleyan* provides crucial insight into his views on a variety of topics which would not otherwise come up in written letters, church letters, or secondhand accounts of him. He commented on many of the political, economic, and social issues of the day. Among the various miscellaneous issues Scott weighed in on directly or indirectly through the paper: the opium war in China, Prince Albert's allowance, and Whiggish economic policy. He also commented on many of the political personalities of the day, criticizing Democrats Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren while, unsurprisingly, speaking effusively of John Quincy Adams. He even referred to then-president John Tyler as "Vice President Tyler."[115] His paper was also filled with sundry, often sentimental material, including anecdotes about animals, literature and poetry, and life advice. The paper, however, primarily covered three issues: the Wesleyan secession, the institution of slavery, and temperance. The first two together, however, dominated the coverage with temperance coming in at a distant, but nonetheless important third place.

At this juncture, I turn to the coverage of slavery and race relations in the *True Wesleyan* to illustrate how Scott carried abolitionism into his new church. Abolitionism, however, cannot be separated from the religious schism that it helped to create. As a result, slavery and abolition are deeply connected to the story of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. The coverage of these issues illustrates how they shaped, coincided, and interacted with the decision to leave the

[114] "New York Watchman.," *True Wesleyan*, January 14, 1843, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott implored *Zion's Watchman* subscribers to "continue" subscribing to the *True Wesleyan*, promising them "as good a paper as the Watchman ever was, ..."
[115] "Untitled.," *True Wesleyan*, June 24, 1843, vol. 1, no. 25, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Methodist Episcopal Church and establish a new church more aligned with Scott's understanding of Wesleyanism. As Scott had argued since 1835, slavery was not a mere political or domestic issue; it was a great moral problem that linked religion, politics, and society together. The *True Wesleyan* and the Wesleyan Methodist Connection served as the culmination of that belief.

The coverage of this paper adopted such a strong antislavery bent that even the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1844 included it on their list of "Anti-Slavery Periodicals," alongside the far-better known and circulated *Emancipator* and *Liberator*.[116] Given that Scott was a man shaped by both the Liberty Party and Garrisonian persuasions, his coverage of slavery served as a combination of both which examined and rebuked the peculiar institution in totality. It accomplished this through four primary types of coverage: religious articles, material that reported on the peculiar institution and its effects, discussions of politics and the Liberty Party, and examinations into race and racism.

The first category of antislavery articles in the *True Wesleyan*, religious news, drew a direct connection between the Wesleyans and their antislavery origins. This took many different forms, from published proceedings of important church conferences to articles written by editors or correspondents. But it achieved its fullest manifestation in the secession letter. The *True Wesleyan* frequently promoted the numerous withdrawal statements sent to Orange Scott from Methodists leaving the church. Although these differed in the particulars and in their length or points of emphasis, they generally followed a similar format to the one established by Scott in his own withdrawal. These secession letters had three major components. They first began with the withdrawing individual identifying their prior religious affiliation – their position and their years in the church – often coupled with an assertion about their appreciation for the church. This

[116] *The Legion of Liberty! And Force of Truth, Containing the Thoughts, Words, and Deeds of Some Prominent Apostles, Champions, and Martyrs, Pictures and Poetry* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1844), p. i.

segued into a discussion of the causes that drove them to secede and almost uniformly cited slavery and church government. This directly invoked the two reasons that Scott had given for his own secession. Finally, the seceder's departure from Methodism was generally framed as the result of a period of soul searching, in which they grappled with issues like intellectual consistency. Although the amount of discussion of the peculiar institution varied, the subject almost always appeared as a central justification for their withdrawal.[117]

William Henry Houck, a licensed preacher from Rome, New York, offered a succinct but insightful example of this process in his withdrawal letter from February 19, 1844. "After having been a member of the M.E. Church for ten years," he explained, "I deem it a duty … to withdraw from that body."[118] He continued, explaining that he only arrived at his decision "from mature deliberation, and after much prayer." The central cause of his secession stemmed from his belief that "it is my duty to unite myself to a people who will contend for the just rights of the whole human family." Merritt Bates, a minister from Troy, New York who seceded at the same time, presented his withdrawal in similar terms, noting he made the "important step" only after "much prayerful and solemn deliberation." He felt withdrawal gave him "a freedom of soul," declaring that "The yoke of slavery and Episcopacy no longer presses me to the dust." Like Houck, he did not depart "in the spirit of bitterness" and still felt "tenderly love" for his former church. Asa Phelps, an ordained preacher whose secession was published alongside Bates', adopted the same

[117] This builds on the work of Charles Allen Lyons, "A Study of Orange Scott and the True Wesleyan, 1843-1847, as Related to the Abolitionist Movement," Unpublished Manuscript, 1974. Lyons' Master's Thesis is the only dedicated study of the *True Wesleyan*. Looking at the entirety of Orange Scott's tenure as proprietor of the *True Wesleyan*, Lyons integrated the paper into the broader antislavery and reform press of antebellum America. He contended that Scott was an abolitionist due to the newspaper's focus on antislavery topics in general. This study, however, differs from Lyons in that it focuses on Scott's editorship and particularly focuses on the different types of antislavery coverage in the newspaper.
[118] Lyons discussed the topic of church withdrawals and their connection to Orange Scott. I focus on the secession letters from the perspective of the seceding Methodists writing to Scott, rather than Scott proclaiming secession to potential seceders.

format. After explaining his position and years in the church, he told the reader he had spent a year having his mind "exercised" on "the subject of the connection of that church with slavery." Like Houck and Bates, Phelps added that this withdrawal was "an affectionate leave" rather than a bitter schism. Orin Doolitte from Wheatland, Michigan, echoed similar reasons for leaving the church as Houck, Bates, and Phelps in his November 6, 1843 letter. After informing Scott he had "dissolved" his "connection" with the Methodist Episcopal Church, he told Scott he did so "with kind feelings toward that body with which I have been connected a score and a half of years." It was not sectarianism that drove him to secede, he continued, but the church's position on slavery, indicated by his belief that he wished to belong to a church in which "I may not be a partaker of other men's sins" and "have a conscience void of offence."[119] These were direct albeit implicit mentions of slavery, given that the one moral issue which divided the denominations was the peculiar institution, not temperance or Sabbath-keeping.

Similarly, Lucius Matlack's withdrawal letter was published on January 21, 1843, and it closely followed the secession template. After announcing that his actions were "the result of serious and prayerful deliberation" and "my duty to God and my fellow man," Matlack wrote that secession stemmed from his "inveterate hatred of slavery" and "our [church] economy." Like other departing Methodists, he explained his actions were done with "no bitterness of feeling toward the Church" and "without an unkind feeling." Another seceder from Syracuse, a travelling minister, followed the same format in his June 25, 1844 statement. He introduced himself to the editors of the *True Wesleyan* as a twenty-year member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and said he came to his decision after more than three months of "agony of soul." Like

[119] William Henry Houck, "Withdrawal," *True Wesleyan*, March 2, 1844, vol. 2, no. 9, p. 2. Merritt Bates, "Letter from Rev. M. Bates," *True Wesleyan*, February 17, 1844, vol. 2, no. 7, p. 2. Asa Phelps, "Withdrawal," *True Wesleyan*, February 17, 1844, vol. 2, no. 7, p. 2. Orin Doolittle, "Withdrawal of an Old Minister in the Genesee Conference," *True Wesleyan*, January 13, 1844, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

others, he outlined his reasons, beginning with slavery and "the principle of chattelizing human beings." Nevertheless, he still wished "to live in peace with my old friends." Hiram Cummings, a minister in Duxbury, Massachusetts, also cited the church's inaction on slavery as a justification. After informing "Brother Scott" of his retrospection on slavery lasting "several months," Cummings concluded that "it was my duty to withdraw from the Methodist E. Church." His letter illustrates the great emphasis that the Wesleyans placed on slavery in justifying their secessions. In his letter, he outlined seven reasons for his withdrawal. The first five directly referenced slavery. The sixth and seventh pertained to church government and what Cummings termed "the tremendous powers vested in the bishops and travelling ministers."[120] However, to simply demarcate slavery and church government as separate issues would still underestimate the significance of slavery's influence on this decision.

The Wesleyans did not arrive at their views about bishops or hierarchy in isolation. They arrived at those positions because they believed church power had been abused during the fights over slavery. Cummings made this connection between slavery and church government explicit, noting that the "pro-slavery ecclesiastical organization" had acted to "sustain slavery" in the past. That led Cummings to conclude that the church's hierarchy had become "despotic, aristocratic and anti-republican … dangerous to civil and subversive of religious liberty." By contrast, he noted, the Wesleyan Methodists were "organized on the moral reform principle" and were "purely Methodistical."[121] Matlack echoed these views and made the argument even more forcefully, arguing that the Methodist Episcopal Church had placed obstacles "in the way of

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[120] Lucius Matlack, "Communications. Withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church." *True Wesleyan*, January 21, 1843, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 1. S. Hoes, "Withdrawal from the M.E. Church, *True Wesleyan*, July 6, 1844," vol. 2, no. 27, p. 2. H. Cummings, "Withdrawal of Rev. H. Cummings and the Duxbury Church," *True Wesleyan*, October 7, 1843, vol. 1, no. 40, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[121] Cummings, "Withdrawal of Rev. H. Cummings and the Duxbury Church," 2.

efficient action" against slavery, leading him to conclude that there needed to be "some modification thereof."[122] Cyrus Prindle shared Cummings and Matlack's sentiments about the connection between slavery and church government. In his withdrawal letter from April 1843, he transitioned from a discussion of slavery to church government by noting his "alarm" over bishops had only occurred after "the discussion of slavery." The editors of the *True Wesleyan* had listed slavery and *then* church government in their justifications. The secession letters that dominated the newspaper in the following months reinforced the sentiment that the first reason preceded the second. The Methodist leadership's inaction against slavery, then, shaped and cultivated the Wesleyans' subsequent objections to church hierarchy itself.[123]

The discussion of slavery often intersected with topics of a religious nature. Nevertheless, Orange Scott cultivated a paper to serve the "general" reader, and his editorship was marked by coverage of slavery that went beyond the scope of the religion, although religion nevertheless remained deeply connected with it.[124] This frequently took two different forms. First, Scott reported on events directly related to slavery as it existed. For example, the newspaper relayed accounts of the cruelties of slavery and even published poetry on the plight of slaves.[125] Secondly, and as a noteworthy foil to that coverage, the *True Wesleyan* offered its readers

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[122] Matlack, "Communications. Withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church." 1.

[123] Cyrus Prindle, "Withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church," *True Wesleyan*, May 13, 1843, vol. 1, no. 19, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[124] See Orange Scott, "True Wesleyan --- Second Volume," *True Wesleyan*, January 6, 1844, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 3. Scott notes the paper will both be "the organ of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection" and "be mostly devoted to subjects of general interest," especially on "the moral enterprise of the age." See P.R. Sawyer, "The True Wesleyan. Dear Brother," *True Wesleyan*, April 6, 1844, vol. 2, no. 14, p. 3. Sawyer praised Scott for creating a newspaper capable of serving as "an advocate of our principles" while also "attracting the general reader." Scott believed that the newspaper served as a give-and-take between the editor and subscribers and felt coverage should be responsive to their needs and interests. For example, Scott opened the *True Wesleyan* up to discussion on secret societies despite his own reservations, arguing his newspaper "must be conducted on liberal principles." See "Communications. Mr. Smith's Address," *True Wesleyan*, August 10, 1844, vol. 2, no. 32, p. 2.

[125] See "A Slave Whipped to Death," *True Wesleyan*, December 9, 1843, vol. 1, no. 49 p.4 for an example of the type of coverage in the *True Wesleyan* on slavery itself. Although a brief article, the paper promised more coverage "As soon as we receive the inquest of the jury." For a sample of antislavery poetry, see L., "The Slave's Prayer," *True Wesleyan*, January 21, 1843, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

portraits of reformed slaveholders. This type of coverage was best reflected by the paper's treatment of Cassius M. Clay.

In one of the first stories covering Clay, Scott republished an article from the *New York Tribune* written by Clay entitled "Slavery….The Evil…The Remedy." Describing Clay simply as "a Kentucky slaveholder" Scott printed Clay's letter, which occupied nearly two columns in his newspaper, and boasted to his readers "Read the following … and then tell us whether Abolitionists are not laboring most hopefully."[126] Although the Clay letter did not necessarily say much that was particularly new in the debate over slavery, the messenger made the words carry more weight. Scott then made a point of casually following Clay's activities. Two weeks later, in selected proceedings of the U.S. Congress, Scott published an exchange in which Joshua Giddings, a Whig congressman, had brought up Cassius Clay and remarked that he "loved" him.[127] And on February 10, 1844, Scott reported to his readers that he had read a pamphlet copy of an "able speech" given by Cassius Clay on slavery.[128]

More noteworthy coverage of Clay came a few months later when the *True Wesleyan* reported on his decision to emancipate his slaves. Scott gave this article frontpage coverage, and made it the first article in the April 20, 1844 number. This article, written by correspondent "An Old Episcopal Methodist," used Clay as a point of contrast with southern Methodists on the eve of the 1844 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This article, written as an open letter to northern Methodists, cited him as proof that churches could make meaningful antislavery inroads in slave states if they simply had the will to do so. Clay's existence, the

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[126] "Views of a Slaveholder," *True Wesleyan*, January 13, 1844, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[127] "General Intelligence. U.S. Congress." *True Wesleyan*, January 27, 1844, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[128] "Untitled.," *True Wesleyan*, February 10, 1844, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

writer declared, was "the most cutting reproach of your conduct that I have ever seen." The author then cited Clay's firsthand account of life in slaveholding Kentucky and his claims that many slaveholders pointed to the position of the church authorities on slavery as their excuse. These slaveholders, the correspondent reasoned, enjoyed "quiet" consciences "for continuing in sin, because you [ministers] tolerate it." Men like Clay, he added, had accomplished all they could because ministers had abrogated their responsibility to maintain a consistent moral standard. "The advocates of liberty in slave States," he wrote, "cannot, dare not act; they are many, and look to you for relief."[129] By standing against not only the prevailing political sentiment of the South, but also its prevailing religious sentiment, Cassius Clay continued to occupy a respectable place in the pages of the *True Wesleyan* as an exemplar.

In a subsequent article published on May 11, 1844, *True Wesleyan* correspondent H.W. wrote to Scott about Clay's decision to manumit his slaves. Like An Old Episcopal Methodist, H.W. contrasted Clay's behavior with that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which had cited southern laws against manumission as a justification for slaveholding. "Here is a distinguished citizen," the correspondent noted, "freeing his slaves…making no mention of the law as being any barrier." This led H.W. to ask the question: "if the law is not binding on Mr. Clay, why or how is it on our Methodist brethren?" These articles served the purpose of presenting Clay as an abolitionist prime mover in the South, and the *True Wesleyan* singled him out for praise specifically because he had acted before the Methodist Episcopal Church. Operating from the premise that slavery would exist as long as Christian churches allowed it, H.W.'s hope was that Clay's example might spur southern churches into action.[130]

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[129] An Old Episcopal Methodist, "Read This! To the Members of the General Conference from the Free States.," *True Wesleyan*, April 20, 1844, vol. 2, no. 16, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[130] H.W., "Liberation of Slaves," *True Wesleyan*, May 11, 1844, vol. 2, no. 19, p. 4, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

The following month, Scott reported on Clay's recent activities in a pair of articles presented side-by-side. First, he cited Clay's account of slaveholding statistics to show readers that the United States was governed by a "small minority" and that, even in the South, few people owned slaves. "Shall one in twenty-eight govern the slave States?" he asked, reinforcing his support for the idea that there existed latent antislavery sentiment not only in the North but also in the South. In the second article, Scott approvingly relayed the news that Clay had freed his slaves and hired them. Both parties, he reported, negotiated on the price of the labor. Scott saw opportunity in this model, observing that "they have no disposition to run away … or to cut their master's throats." In the end, he concluded that "cash produces more labor than the lash."[131] This sentiment echoes what historians like Eric Foner consider free labor ideology.[132] These reports, even when brief, kept Clay's name in the news and further cemented his legacy as a reformed slaveholder and the first of what Scott hoped would become many. He was indelible proof that the antislavery message had tangible success.

Clay coverage went beyond the pages of the *True Wesleyan* and into the actions of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. During the New England Annual Conference, the Wesleyans singled out Clay for praise during resolutions on slavery. The resolutions, written by a committee composed of Orange Scott, George May, William H. Brewster, and Christopher Mason, highlighted Clay's manumission as one of two recent facts "of special interest." Clay, "a popular politician and statesman" who had been "nursed and educated in the midst of slavery," represented a turning tide. "The example of such a man cannot fail to exert a great extensive

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[131] "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, June 15, 1844, vol. 2, no. 24, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[132] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 40-51. Foner argued that what he termed "free labor ideology" was the glue that bound the fledging Republican Party together during the 1850s. This ideology believed in the inherent dignity of work and juxtaposed the efficacies of free labor with the inefficiencies of slave labor. This belief in the "economic superiority of free to slave labor," Foner noted, "became a major argument of the Republicans."

influence upon Southern men," the committee concluded. The other important fact the committee noted was a growing antislavery movement in the North that opposed Texas annexation and had helped divide the Methodist Episcopal Church on slavery. That Scott and the other members of the committee could juxtapose Clay's individual act alongside the two most significant antislavery events of 1844 highlights how significant the Wesleyans viewed his actions. The committee's opinion of Clay as exemplar also explains why Scott made him a recurring topic: he was tangible proof that not all southerners accepted the plantation system. He was proof that the "whole enterprise" was "working like leaven and producing a glorious and mighty revolution in the country among all classes, political and religious."[133] The Wesleyans, then, saw Clay as a template for the religious institutions in America to effectuate the end of slavery through moral clarity, and his example further reinforced their decision to part ways with what they saw as a proslavery church.

The third form of antislavery coverage in the *True Wesleyan* was embodied by its engagement in politics. Scott did not shy away from political issues during his tenure as editor, taking aim at recent presidents with the notable exception of John Quincy Adams.[134] Scott and his fellow editors enthusiastically backed the Liberty Party at the local, state, and national levels and used the *True Wesleyan* as a vehicle to promote them during in the 1843 and 1844 elections.

The *True Wesleyan's* first number deprecated "the party politics of the day" and told readers that "we shall have nothing to do" with it except to "carry out our principles as friends of

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[133] O. Scott, George May, Wm. H. Brewster, and Christopher Mason, "On Anti-Slavery.," *True Wesleyan*, June 22, 1844, vol. 2, no. 25, p. 3

[134] Scott admired John Quincy Adams despite his affiliation with the Whig Party. Much of his coverage of the U.S. Congress pertained to Adams' opposition to Texas annexation and the gag rule. The gag rule had been a policy adopted by the United States Congress in the 1830s that prohibited discussion of slavery and tabled antislavery petitions. Adams led a bipartisan coalition that eventually repealed it in 1844. Scott, however, further demonstrated his admiration for Adams when he penned an article juxtaposing John Quincy Adams' domestic agenda as president with that of his detractors, indicating sympathy for Adams' nationalistic agenda.

universal liberty."[135] Nevertheless, to Scott, that meant being engaged in politics as an active observer rather than a partisan participant by criticizing those who stood in the way of human rights. His political opinions beyond slavery did not neatly fit into the parameters of the Second Party System. Slavery, however, was still the paramount issue for him and dwarfed all other issues. It ensured he could not find a home in either of the major parties. In his mind, and the mind of his fellow editors and most of his correspondents, both major parties were tainted by slavery and therefore conscientious abolitionists could not vote for either. Yet Scott could not take the ground of William Lloyd Garrison that voting itself was wrong. The Liberty Party, he reasoned, was the solution because it was the lone political party organized on an explicitly abolitionist foundation.

The presidential election of 1844 offered Scott the opportunity to make this argument with even greater clarity. He consistently saw the Liberty Party as the political arm of his own struggle against slavery in the religious sphere, a sentiment echoed by his gratitude to the Liberty Party of altering the date of their national convention in 1843 so that Wesleyans who had attended their General Conference would also be able to attend that convention.[136] Nevertheless, the 1844 elections marked the best opportunity for the Liberty Party to make significant inroads into the political system. The Democrats nominated James K. Polk while the Whigs turned to their longtime leader, Henry Clay of Kentucky. These candidates offered a clear contrast for the Liberty Party because both men were slaveholders.

On July 6, 1844, the *True Wesleyan* endorsed James G. Birney, the Liberty Party nominee for president. Like Cassius Clay, Birney had been a former slaveholder-turned-

[135] Orange Scott and Jotham Horton, "Prospects.," *True Wesleyan*, January 7, 1843, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[136] "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, March 25, 1843, vol. 1, no. 12, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

abolitionist who moved to Cincinnati and founded the antislavery newspaper *The Philanthropist*. Assistant editor Jotham Horton penned the editorial endorsing "this eminent patriot and philanthropist" for president in "the midst of the degeneracy of the present times," noting:

> [I]t is consolatory to the heart to be able to contemplate…a fellow being who is worthy to be called by the noblest of all designations, a man. If there be one in whom the moral and intellectual nature is truly developed … that man is J.G. Birney…. We rejoice that there is such a man in nomination for the presidency….[137]

What followed the endorsement was a lengthy and hagiographic campaign biography, beginning with Birney's origins as "a wealthy planter, and holder of a large number of slaves" and ending with his transformation into the presidential candidate who would become "the first man elevated to the presidency for the glorious purpose of overthrowing the political power of slavery."[138] The *True Wesleyan's* admiration of Birney continued during the campaign, even advertising an engraving of his likeness and promoting a published biography of him.[139]

One of the most insightful political articles that reflected the tenor of the *True Wesleyan's* political coverage came from an article on the eve of the 1843 elections entitled "Moral Action at the Ballot Box." The article, written by correspondent Beta Sigma, articulated many of the ideas that Scott had already established about the political parties and the moral obligation to vote. Beta Sigma's argument rested upon the premise that issues of "human liberty and the rights of God" trumped any other political issues, whether they be "bank or sub-treasury, tariff or free trade, or any other mere pecuniary interest (that divides parties)." In the case of those policy issues, how to vote was a decision without "moral bearing." Slavery, however, was different because it was a moral subject inside the political realm and could not be treated like other

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[137] H., "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, July 6, 1844, vol. 2, no. 27, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[138] "Who is Birney?" *True Wesleyan*, July 6, 1844, vol. 2, no. 27, p. 1-2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[139] "Goodwin's Likeness of Birney," *True Wesleyan*, August 10, 1844, vol. 2, no. 32, p. 2, and "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, August 17, 1844, vol. 2, no. 33, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

issues. Therefore, Beta Sigma reasoned, abolitionists had the moral and religious obligation to exercise their franchise against the peculiar institution and to vote for abolitionist candidates.[140]

He then carried the argument further, asserting that abolitionists could never vote Whig or Democrat under any circumstances. "It is a SIN to support pro-slavery parties by our votes or influences," he wrote, noting that "the whigs and democrats are united with, dependent on, and governed by the slave power." He then looked at two possible rebuttals to his article: that an individual vote did not matter and that one should vote for the lesser of two evils. To dispense with the first counterargument, Beta Sigma argued that voting for the major parties was still an individual sin regardless of whether that vote affected the outcome. "Suppose my single vote did not turn the scale," he wrote before declaring, "I sin as much as if I were alone; for the responsibility cannot be divided among us." Likewise, he argued that voters did not have the right to cast votes for "the least of two moral evils" because to do so "is doing evil that good may come." In an assertion that foreshadowed the 1844 contest between Polk and Clay, he likened that view to voting for a slaveholder to stop a "worse" slaveholder. The action was still wrong, he noted, because both sanctioned a moral evil. That view, he concluded, was based on the faulty premise that "a Christian can do it [a sin] more piously than a wicked man can."[141]

The Beta Sigma article illustrated Wesleyans Methodism's overarching relationship with the political dimension to abolitionism, viewing the Liberty Party as the only alternative to the two major parties. Since his emergence on the antislavery scene, Orange Scott had seen slavery as a multifaceted issue in the sense that it had corrupted the churches, the state, and the society. The solution, therefore, required cooperation from all three. His coverage of slavery, then, operated from that premise. That meant that his abolitionist crusade did not end with the church

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[140] Beta Sigma, "Moral Action at the Ballot Box," *True Wesleyan*, August 26, 1843, vol. 1, no. 34, p. 3.
[141] Beta Sigma, "Moral Action at the Ballot Box," 3.

discipline or the ballot box: it carried over into society and how individuals in that society were to treat their fellow human beings. As a result, his paper directly confronted much of the racism of the time, and it articulated a vision for a society in which racial animus had ceased to exist.

The *True Wesleyan* often accomplished this through their reporting on stories about racism against African Americans, a concept Jotham Horton aptly termed "colorphobia." Horton portrayed this bigotry in medical terms, defining it as "a malignant disease" that "affects the mind and the heart" before diagnosing its "symptoms."[142] The paper even reported on a Massachusetts bill to ban racial discrimination on railroads, which Horton remarked was an area commonly "infect[ed]" by prejudice.[143] In another case, Scott looked at a "respectable colored girl, nearly white" who was "denied a seat in the Albany and Troy hourly" on account of her race. Scott emphasized the fact that she was "nearly white" to further highlight the arbitrariness of discrimination. He blamed this discriminatory behavior on "agents of that color-hating establishment." This illustrated how Scott also directed his opposition to slavery against the racial prejudice that sustained it. "How long shall these insults continue?" he asked readers before declaring, "Shame upon such infamous conduct!"[144] These assertions left little ambiguity about the *True Wesleyan's* position on discrimination and racism.

Similarly, Horton penned an article about an "interesting conversation" he had with Rev. John N. Mars, an African American minister from Salem, Massachusetts, who had experienced discrimination during a visit to Baltimore. The article addressed issues related to the plight of free blacks, including their need for freedom papers and the nature of citizenship. In this case, Mars had brought signed letters from the mayor of Salem and two notary publics with him to

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[142] H., "Colorphobia," *True Wesleyan*, August 5, 1843, vol. 1, no. 31, p. 3.
[143] See "Rail-Road Discrimination," *True Wesleyan*, April 8, 1843, vol. 1, no. 14, p. 4. And H., "Colorphobia.," 3.
[144] "COLORED WOMAN INSULTED BY TROY AND ALBANY 1-2 HOURLY LINE OF STAGES," *True Wesleyan,* August 10, 1844, vol. 2, no. 32, p. 3.

Baltimore to prove his status as a free person. Nevertheless, he was still denied access to a steamboat for his return home. "They [the documents] were not the least service," Horton wrote, adding, "they were not so much as looked at."[145] He then conveyed two major points related to race relations in the United States. First, he offered a critique of the very concept of freedom papers. He defined them as "all the documents needful to show that he was a free man" and juxtaposed that concept with his vision of the North. "Here we know no man by his birth or complexion; we cannot know him as a slave," Horton declared, "Be he a man – we recognize him as such. We would know of no distinctions but those intellectual and moral." Second, Horton offered a broader argument against the political inequality that African Americans faced and he asserted that southern states were legally obligated to treat free blacks as they would whites. To support this argument, he cited the privileges and immunities clause of the U.S. Constitution. Since Mars was a citizen of Massachusetts, he ought to be treated no different than a white citizen of that state. Horton's argument in Mars' defense, therefore, served as a call for racial equality in politics and society through citizenship and equal justice.[146]

The *True Wesleyan's* coverage of race relations did not simply discuss the political or social dimensions; it also addressed the connection between racism and American Christianity. Scott's newspaper explored the Wesleyan Methodist Connection's role in promoting not only the abolition of slavery, but an end to bigotry and sectarianism. With respect to African Americans, the *True Wesleyan* never equivocated in its support for tolerance. An account from George Pegler, a Wesleyan minister from Seneca Falls, illustrated the fruits of the church in action. "The

[145] H., "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, August 10, 1844, vol. 2, no. 32, p. 3. This was not the first time the *True Wesleyan* had covered John N. Mars' experiences with racism, having republished an account Mars gave to the *Bangor Gazette* about discrimination he experienced while on a steamboat from Portland to Bangor in 1843. See J.N. Mars, "Rev. J.N. Mars. --- Steamboat Huntress," *True Wesleyan*, August 5, 1843, vol. 1, no. 31, p. 2.
[146] H., "Untitled," 3.

cause of the poor slave is remembered," Pegler notified Scott, telling him that this position came at the cost of potential members. He then reported that "some would like to attend Wesleyan preaching … were it not for our *N-----ism*." Pegler, however, remained unfazed. "Let the devil and pro-slavery men hate us," he declared, insisting that there were "many interesting cases of conversion to our principles." To illustrate this, he relayed a particular example of an individual who had heard him preach. The man confronted Pegler and told him that "he had heard enough of N-----ism to last him six months." The next week, Pegler noted, the man was still there. Despite Pegler's antislavery preaching, the man kept coming until he became a Wesleyan. But this "conversion" as Pegler put it, did not end with the man's opposition to slavery or his Liberty Party vote. He also rejected racism. Pegler recounted that "at our quarterly meeting, he took his place at the Lord's table alongside a colored brother, and is now in every sense a *true Wesleyan*."[147] It was not, then, a mere opposition to slavery or a public support for antislavery candidates that made one, in Pegler's words, "a *true Wesleyan*." It was the transformation in how a person treated their fellow humans that made them one. The *True Wesleyan* therefore did not limit its coverage of slavery to party politics or religious institutions. It carried that struggle into every sphere, down to the individual level, and its coverage highlighted the ways in which religion, politics, and society intersected.

The years 1843 and 1844 marked a new chapter in the struggle over slavery and church government in American Methodism. Impelled by the Baltimore Conference and the increasingly bleak prospects of abolitionism inside the church, Orange Scott and his closest allies made the momentous decision to leave their longtime church. But they did not simply seek to depart a church that had been corrupted; they wished to restore the old church. Through the *True*

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[147] George Pegler, "Letter from Rev. G. Pegler," *True Wesleyan*, February 17, 1844, vol. 2, no. 7, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Italics in original.

Wesleyan, Scott, Horton, Lee, and other abolition Methodists presented a manifesto to themselves and to the world of their brand of Methodism: support for the abolition of slavery through moral suasion and political action, reforms to church government, and racial equality. In the years that followed, Scott would continue to play a crucial role in his church's affairs as a thinker and administrator. He sought to simultaneously turn Wesleyan Methodism into a viable alternative to Episcopal Methodism and reign in the more radical impulses of some within the Wesleyan ranks. These subjects are the topic of the final chapter.

Chapter 12: Orange Scott and the Wesleyan Methodist Secession, Part II

The Wesleyans moved quickly in translating their secession movement into a new organization. This did not mean they ignored their former church. To the contrary, Orange Scott paid close attention to its affairs. This included frequent clashes with Abel Stevens, the anti-abolition editor of the *Zion's Herald*, as well as coverage of the abolition Methodists who remained in the church – men like D.H. Ela, Joseph A. Merrill, and J.D. Bridges – and broader Methodist events like the general conference of 1844. In one instance, he devoted nearly eight pages of his newspaper to a Methodist Episcopal antislavery convention that was held in Boston in 1843.[1]

In the first two years of his church's existence, Scott took an active part in its organizational affairs. He attended its Wesleyan Methodist Antislavery Convention in Andover on February 1-2, 1843, and served on a committee with his assistant editors that published a statement calling on Episcopal Methodists to join the new church on the basis that Christians could not remain in a church that sustained moral evil.[2] But a mere opposition to slavery did not make a religious organization. It needed structure. To that end, Scott and a committee of his closest allies – Luther Lee, Jotham Horton, Seth Sprague, Jr., William Blakemore and S.R. Jackson – met at the newspaper's office in Boston at 9 am on March 3, 1843, to draft a Discipline for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. In the weeks that followed, Scott published

[1] "Methodist Episcopal Anti-Slavery Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, February 4, 1843, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 1-2 and "Methodist Episcopal Anti-Slavery Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, February 11, 1843, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 1-2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[2] L. Lee, O. Scott, J. Horton, "To the Abolitionists in the Methodist E. Church.," *True Wesleyan*, February 18, 1843, vol. 1, no. 7, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott offered a very brief sketch of the convention during the previous week, which he headlined with a speech from the then-83-year-old Seth Sprague, Sr. See *True Wesleyan*, February 11, 1843, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

their work.[3] From the beginning of the secession, Scott, Jotham Horton, and La Roy Sunderland borrowed liberally from the British Wesleyan Methodists. On most theological questions, the Wesleyans accepted a more traditionalist brand of evangelical Christianity: they supported Trinitarianism, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, original sin, free will, and justification by faith. They also embraced the Old Testament, called on Wesleyans to obey its "moral" commandments, and argued that the Bible contained all that was "necessary to salvation." Their system of government echoed the Methodist Episcopal Church with democratic, republican, and low church modifications: the election of conference presidents being among the most notable changes. On social issues, Wesleyans were expected to oppose all moral evil. The church offered clear positions on slavery, temperance, usury, and peace. The most noteworthy exception was secret societies, which the Discipline left to the discretion of annual conferences. Yet this decision is important because it exemplifies Scott's belief that the annual conferences should possess autonomy and represent their members and ministers.[4]

The secession culminated with the Utica Convention on May 31, 1843. During this meeting, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection was formally organized with an initial membership of 6000 over six annual conferences. Scott also attained his high watermark within the new church, being elected by his fellow Wesleyans to serve as the denomination's first president with Edward Smith and Jotham Horton selected as vice presidents. Luther Lee recounted to the *True*

[3] For an announcement of this meeting, see *True Wesleyan*, February 25, 1843, vol. 1, no. 8, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). The Discipline can be found on March 11, March 18, March 25, and April 8. Scott published the work in its entirety on July 1, 1843, and then printed it for sale and widespread distribution.
[4] "The Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in the United States.," *True Wesleyan*, July 1, 1843, vol. 1, no. 26, p. 1-3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). In Section II of the Discipline, Scott and the committee reaffirmed the Trinity, the divinity and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of free will, the centrality of faith for salvation, and the sacraments of baptism and communion. The policy on slavery was identical to the original rules in the Methodist Episcopal Church. On the question of peace, the church was equally unambiguous: it condemned war "in all its forms" and targeted "the war spirit" as "inconsistent with the benevolent designs of the Christian Religion." This Discipline was the final version agreed upon at the Utica Convention, which was based on the one that Scott and the committee drafted.

Wesleyan that "the Convention is large, beyond our expectation, and that prospects are bright."[5] Scott played an active role in proceedings, serving on committees for stationing, annual conferences, correspondence with other denominations, and missions.[6] According to Lucius Matlack, who also attended the convention, no delegate appealed a single decision that Scott made as president. Reflecting on the convention's opening day, Matlack further recalled an episode in which a person seated next to him was impressed with the president and asked who was presiding. "That is ORANGE SCOTT," Matlack simply answered.[7] Even an anonymous correspondent for the *Liberator*, "Utica," agreed with Matlack's characterization of Scott's presidency, informing William Lloyd Garrison that Scott "showed himself prompt and well versed in the duties of his office."[8]

On the second day of the conference, Scott delivered an address in the morning on the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the purpose of the Wesleyans. Their movement, he explained, had at first sought to purify the old church before secession became a necessity. Most notably, Scott again linked the issues of slavery and episcopacy together and offered insight into why he had opted for restoration rather than reform: the fight over slavery had "opened the way" to attacking "the enemy in another quarter" which also happened to be its

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[5] L., "The Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, June 10, 1843, vol. 1, no. 23, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). 6000 members were reported during the convention, and was reported by the *African Repository*, a pro-colonization publication. See "Secession from the Methodist Church.," *African Repository*, August 1, 1843, vol. 19, no. 8, p. 23-24, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). This source also suggests that they expected another 4000 to join the new movement.
[6] "List of the Principal Committees Appointed at the Utica Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, June 17, 1843, vol. 1, no. 24, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[7] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 210.
[8] Utica, "Wesleyan Convention – Irish Repeal – Odd Fellowship.," *Liberator*, June 23, 1843, vol. 13, no. 25, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). The writer still criticized the Wesleyans for their "great and glaring defect" of "sectarianism."

"more vulnerable point."[9] In other words, the abolition of slavery necessitated first winning the battle over church government.

The Utica Wesleyan Convention of 1843 was, in many respects, a symbolic fulfillment of the Utica Antislavery Convention from 1838. It reflected the shift among many of the restoration-minded antislavery Methodists. They had first met as Episcopal Methodists seeking church action against slavery and mild church government reform. Five years later, they met in the same city to form a new denomination that could resurrect the principles of John Wesley. The second Utica convention, like the one that preceded it, brought ministers and laity together to determine their direction. For Horton, the lay participation alone "demonstrated the falsity of the notion, that laymen are not to be trusted in the legislative councils of the church."[10] Like Methodist Episcopal general conferences, the Utica Convention also assigned ministers to their stations and determined the presidents of the denomination's six annual conferences. Horton was elected for the New England Conference, Lee for the New York Conference, and Cyrus Prindle for the Champlain Conference. Lucius Matlack was also assigned as one of two ministers to Providence, Rhode Island, while Scott received the blessing of the convention to continue serving as editor of the *True Wesleyan* for the 1843-1844 conference year.[11]

As a leader of the new denomination, Scott was exceedingly ambitious in the sense that he wished to create a truly viable alternative to the Methodist Episcopal Church. His tenure as editor of the *True Wesleyan*, which grew its subscriber base by 50% from 2000 to 3000 in its

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[9] L., "The Convention.," 2-3. Luther Lee summarized and paraphrased Scott's speech.
[10] H., "An Incident of the Convention.," and "Laymen in the Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, June 17, 1843, vol. 1, no. 24, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Horton remarked that the sight of lay delegates saddened him, because he began to wonder about "the services which they might have rendered to the church...."
[11] "Stations of the Preachers.," *True Wesleyan*, June 17, 1843, vol. 1, no. 24, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Even if elected president, ministers generally had a station: Lee at Syracuse and Horton at Boston.

first year alone, proved successful. During that same year, the Methodists in Lowell staged an insurrection that resulted in both St. Paul's and Wesley Chapel voting overwhelmingly to join the new movement; the Methodist Episcopal minority in the city was subsequently left without a single church. Although Scott did not speak for all Wesleyan Methodists, he was their perceived spiritual and organizational leader. The Episcopal Methodists, including Thomas E. Bond of the *Christian Advocate* and Abel Stevens of the *Zion's Herald*, frequently employed the term "Scottite" as a pejorative.[12]

Moreover, Scott further refined his critiques of the Methodist Episcopal Church to create the definitive case in favor of Wesleyan Methodism. This began in March 1844 with a series of essays in the *True Wesleyan*. At the same time, he began work on a definitive treatment of the Wesleyan perspective on slavery and abolition, which was first published in book form as *The Methodist E. Church and Slavery*. Eventually both the works on slavery and church government were consolidated into a single comprehensive work: *Grounds for Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church, or Book for the Times: Being an Examination of Her Connection with Slavery and Also of Her Form of Government*. In making the case against episcopal church government, Scott was, by his own admission, heavily influenced by Henry B. Bascom, a Methodist Doctor of Divinity who had flirted with low church leanings before returning to the Methodist Episcopal fold, the Methodist Protestant Church's explanatory guide to their denomination, and a work entitled "The Polity of the Methodist E. Church."[13]

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[12] In one of the first uses of the phrase Scottite, Thomas Bond, the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, excoriated the Wesleyan Methodist Discipline. He began his editorial by noting how "a Papist could subscribe to their creed" and concluded that they could not even be considered a Protestant denomination. "Review of the Scottite Discipline – Improperly Called Wesleyan.," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, August 23, 1843, vol. 18, no. 2, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 23, 2023).

[13] "A 'Book for the Times.,'" *True Wesleyan*, March 16, 1844, vol. 2, no. 11, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott continued this series in the March 23, 1844, the March 30, 1844, and April 6, 1844 numbers of the *True Wesleyan*. *Grounds for Secession* consolidated these essays and other works. The Methodist Protestants were a splinter denomination that had seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church before the

The Methodist E. Church and Slavery, which was also based on *True Wesleyan* articles, was structured in a Question-and-Answer format that sought to prove what Scott had contended since 1835: that the Methodist Episcopal Church had strayed from its Wesleyan roots on slavery. The work was divided into four parts: the views of John Wesley and the English Wesleyans, the former sentiments of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the proslavery character of the existing church, and the duty of abolitionists to secede from proslavery churches. Scott's narrative followed the one he had already established: the church had first stood on firm antislavery footing until it began its "retrograde march" in 1800, although he traced the origins of "the first retrograde step" to 1792 with a seemingly innocuous modification to the General Rule.[14]

The original rule from 1789 read that the church prohibited "The buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, and children...." The 1792 modification changed this to read, "The buying or selling men, women, or children, ..." and, by 1808, this was again changed to read, "The buying *and* selling of men, women *and* children, ..." For Scott, these changes were significant. They were an "important admission" and proof that exploded the anti-abolition narrative that they general rule on slavery had never been changed. These adjustments, he argued, "have greatly altered the character of the rule." The process was simple: the omission of souls in 1792 meant "the language was smothered down, and no longer calculated to shock the moral feelings so violently." That then paved the way for an even more substantial change,

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Wesleyans; their grievances were solely confined to church government. As a result, they became a friend and rival at different points in time due to different opinions on slavery. The Protestants were not strictly proslavery but had anti-abolitionists in their ranks and this led to controversy between the church and Luther Lee, who used his platform in the *True Wesleyan* to criticize them. Scott, by contrast, had a warmer relationship with them, yet, when forced to choose between Lee and the Protestants, ultimately chose the former and criticized the latter's "unfavorable allusions." See O. Scott, "Wesleyans and Protestants.," *True Wesleyan*, December 27, 1845, vol. 3, no. 52, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021)

[14] Rev. O. Scott, *The Methodist E. Church and Slavery: Containing Also the Views of the English Wesleyan Methodist Church with Regard to Slavery; And a Treatise on the Duty of Seceding from All Pro-Slavery Churches: - The Whole Comprising a Book of Interesting Facts*, HeinOnline (Boston: O. Scott, For the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, 1844), 27.

which replaced "or" with "and," meaning that the rule changed completely. "Previous to this, the buying or selling a man, woman, or children – any human being – was a violation of the rule; but not so now," he wrote, adding that "It takes six things to violate the rule as it now stands." To violate the rule after 1808, Scott argued that a person had to buy a man, woman, *and* child *as well as* sell a man, woman, *and* child. He then carried this further to conclude that, since 1820, the church had "born no testimony against slavery, except what is contained in the mutilated general rule" and even that rule was "a dead letter in the South."[15]

In the end, Scott argued that the willingness to defend, ignore, or even affirm slavery made the Methodist Episcopal Church culpable for its evils. "The Church now refuses to speak out to the world in the language of her Discipline," he wrote, adding that "she hedges up the way of those who *dare to do so*. The church is stained with *blood*, and haunted with the groans of *deathless spirits*!" This perspective led Scott to the conclusion that the Methodist Episcopal Church could no longer be saved because there was no longer anything left of John Wesley inside the church to conserve. The only way to restore Wesleyanism, then, was to create a new institution that embodied the principles of the idyllic past. But the logical end of Scott's conclusion was not strictly Wesleyan; it was a universal rule. Christians, not just Methodists, had the duty to secede from proslavery churches. Here Scott spoke in even broader terms, that transcended denomination. "God, by express command, requires us to come out from all religious associations in fellowship with sinners," he replied to the hypothetical question of what

[15] Scott, *The Methodist E. Church and Slavery*, 27-31. Scott crystallized his belief that the church had evolved by noting that they refused to even condemn slavery as a moral evil during the 1836 and 1840 general conferences. "In 1780, slavery was 'contrary to the laws of God, man and nature;' now, 'not a moral evil!'" He added: "Never till of late, has a Methodist minister dared to lift his voice or pen in defence of slavery; but now, the manstealer and robber finds apologists and defenders among Methodist Episcopal preachers, and that too in the Free States!" Scott, *The Methodist E. Church and Slavery*, 49, 53.

people should do if they belonged to “a church tolerating slavery.”[16] Again, this was not a simply Methodist duty but a Christian one: “Christians do not become free from their individual responsibility by becoming associated in churches.” In his conclusion, Scott returned to this connection between duty and secession and he urged readers that Satan would use their laudable affection for “church attachments” as a “snare” to “bind us to sin....”[17]

In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church faced its greatest test and ultimately fractured over a controversy involving Bishop James Andrew and slaves that he had inherited. Scott and his fellow Wesleyans, however, regarded the antislavery action of their former church as being driven by expediency rather than principled antislavery conviction. Even the repeal of the notorious provision against Black testimony, for example, was panned. Doing so “only places the church back where she was four years ago,” Horton remarked in an editorial.[18] The change in direction did not, therefore, bring the Wesleyans back to their former church. If anything, the schism emboldened them. At the end of the denomination’s first year, Lowell, Boston, and, to a lesser extent, New York, emerged as the nexuses of Wesleyan activity in the East with a small but growing number of Wesleyans in western states like Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana.

On August 3, 1844, just two months before the first general conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, Orange Scott offered his own perspective on the sundering of the largest evangelical church in the United States and what it meant for the nation more broadly. “A division of the M.E. Church will hasten the abolition of slavery in our country,” he observed, arguing that slavery could only survive so long as it maintained “Northern support.” But this was

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[16] Scott, *The Methodist E. Church and Slavery*, 53, 78-86. Scott cited warnings against bad company in Matthew 18:17, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 2 Corinthians 6: 17, Ephesians 5:2, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
[17] Scott, *The Methodist E. Church and Slavery*, 88-92, 128. Scott’s ecumenical turn was based on his belief that most Christians shared “*one communion table.*”
[18] H., “General Conference.,” *True Wesleyan*, June 15, 1844, vol. 2, no. 24, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

no isolated event, confined simply to one denomination. "It will greatly weaken the cords of union," he predicted, but carried this view to an extreme conclusion: disunion was not a bad thing. "The glory of God and the happiness of man requires a severance of the 'Union,' both in church and state," he wrote.[19] Scott, expecting this view to be controversial, immediately clarified that his views did not stem from the Garrisonian foundations of non-resistance and opposition to human government. He then offered a prediction over what would follow the Methodist division: other churches would emulate that same geographic split. This religious disunion would soon spill into politics. "The questions of liberty or slavery must, ere long, be the great political party questions," he wrote, noting that existing political issues would become "minor considerations" and, once that had happened, the South would feel compelled to secede. He then predicted that a division of the Union would "open" 1500 miles of land that could become "great facilities for the escape of the slaves" and he further surmised that this pressure on slavery would eventually force the border states to accept emancipation. Scott believed, as he had since the beginning, that moral suasion alone could not end slavery. It was important, but not sufficient. Ultimately, it would require "the force of circumstances" to bring about abolition.[20] Scott stopped short of predicting a civil war, arguing that even "those eyes which only see through cotton bags and human souls" could understand that such a war could not be won. Nevertheless, Scott's view that disunion could secure the end of slavery illustrates that a part of his worldview remained fundamentally Garrisonian even after his split with Garrison.

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[19] Scott reiterated this later in the article, writing: "blessed be the day when the ungodly national compact shall be broken up!" His views, however, were predicated explicitly on the assumption that the national government consisted of a slaveholding South and an apathetic North. This critique rested on opposition to the way the compact had developed, concluding, "Cut off Northern support, in every sense, and you take out its [slavery's] life blood."
[20] "Division of the M.E. Church: Its Effect on the Union of the States.," *True Wesleyan*, August 3, 1844, vol. 2, no. 31, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Scott's editorial in favor of disunion, however, was met with considerable opposition from within his own church. Even some of his most loyal supporters condemned him. Seth Sprague, Jr. admitted a few weeks later that he read it "with much surprise and pain" because it advocated "rabid and insane sentiments." He even threatened to leave the denomination over the matter. Hiram Cummings, another close ally of Scott's, challenged him on disunion. Like Sprague, he read them "with much surprise and regret" and argued that slavery was the consequence of bad politicians rather than the U.S. Constitution.[21]

Scott, however, wrote a rebuttal to Sprague, Cummings, and all the other correspondents who criticized him. This article, entitled "The Human Mind," articulated the same conservatism that had characterized earlier works like the *Appeal*. Changes, he wrote, "are comparatively few, slow in their progress, and are brought about to a greater or less extent by interested motives." Yet those changes, or "Small improvements" as he put it, could only be realized if individuals "breast the storm of public opinion, and stand out an age before the times on all questions of reform." He brought up three reformers by name who he felt exemplified this tendency: Martin Luther, John Wesley, and William Wilberforce. At one time, he observed, Wesley and Wilberforce were considered "fanatical" on the issue of slavery. Just as he had said during the Cincinnati General Conference of 1836, those two men had stood on principle and, by doing so, changed public opinion. Scott, however, was building towards a specific point. Disunion was another such radical measure. But by citing historical precedent, Scott showed that his present beliefs were not an extreme departure from the past. "The dividing of the Union between this country and Great Britain," he argued, was once considered among "the most 'insane' measures

[21] Seth Sprague, Jr., "Dissolution of the Union.," *True Wesleyan*, August 31, 1844, vol. 2, no. 35, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). H. Cummings, "The Constitution.," September 7, 1844, vol. 2, no. 36, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Cummings instead argued that the solution was to unite the North and elect abolitionists.

imaginable." He did not stop there. Disunion in 1844 made even more sense than in 1776 because the latter was the result of "a little three-penny tax on tea, &c.!" The point of this article, however, was not to prove that his views about disunion were correct and that men like Sprague and Cummings were wrong; he instead made a far simpler point about patience. "He who reform men must have great patience, and be unwearied in his efforts," he observed.[22]

Major changes came for Scott and the *True Wesleyan* a month later during the first general conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection at Cleveland, Ohio. Although Scott was elected president, he declined to serve on account of having been president at the Utica Convention. Ultimately, the conference decided to make his newspaper the official organ of the denomination. Scott was phased out of the editorship position in favor of Luther Lee, although Scott retained ownership of the paper.[23] While Scott's unpopular opinion on disunion may have facilitated this change, the decision likely stemmed from other factors as well. First, Scott and his family had struggled with poor health since 1843 and, as a result, Scott had frequently been forced to conduct his responsibilities as editor away from the office. Moreover, his commuting about 150 miles between Newbury and Boston had proven to be a "great inconvenience." In

[22] "The Human Mind.," *True Wesleyan*, September 7, 1844, vol. 2, no. 36, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). In a follow-up article, Scott argued that he had "nothing more to say on this subject, at present." "Division of the Union.," *True Wesleyan*, September 7, 1844, vol. 2, no. 36, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[23] The *Liberty Standard* endorsed this move, arguing that "It could not have passed into better hands". See *Liberty Standard*, November 28, 1844, vol. 4, no. 17, p. 1, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 13, 2022). Agent, "The True Wesleyan.," *True Wesleyan*, February 8, 1845, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). In February 1845, Scott endorsed Lee's early tenure as editor, writing that "I think this organ of our connection, under brother Lee's supervision is about what it ought to be .... Lee makes a better paper than I could have when it was under my name, ... As clear-headed, logical, polemical writer, there is not, in my opinion, Luther Lee's superior in the nation." Lee largely continued the same general direction as Scott, especially as it related to slavery. He was, however, more willing to pick fights and engage in controversies with groups like the Methodist Protestants and the Garrisonian abolitionists. When criticized by the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Lee ridiculed their attacks as "the child of prejudice" and boasted, "Our creed is anti-slavery, our professions are anti-slavery, and we have published, AND WE HEREBY PUBLISH TO THE WORLD THAT WE WANT NONE TO JOIN OUR CHURCHES BUT ANTI-SLAVERY PERSONS, ..." See "National Anti-Slavery Standard vs. Wesleyans.," *True Wesleyan*, April 26, 1845, vol. 3, no. 17, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

August 1844, Scott even admitted that he should have moved his family to Boston.[24] Second, and connected with this, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection chose to relocate their offices from Boston to New York City, deeming that location as being centrally located between the eastern and the western halves of the United States. The Wesleyans had, since the beginning, held an affinity for the western states and wanted to make inroads there; Scott himself shared that view and, if not for his family problems, had planned to tour there in 1844.

In one instance in the late summer and early fall of 1844, Scott was out of the office in Boston for almost three weeks. During that time, Scott remained in Newbury to help tend to one of his children who had been sick with what he identified as erysipelas and, during that time, another one of his children, probably the two-year old Orange W. Scott, suffered what Orange Scott called a "shocking accident." While Scott was working in his field, his son was playing inside the house with a stick and knocked a tea kettle full of hot water on himself, badly burning his face, neck, chest, shoulders, hands, and one of his arms. The child was so "badly scalded" that Scott wrote that "the skin came off immediately." Scott even remarked that could hardly recognize as his own son.[25]

Nevertheless, Scott continued to occupy an important place in the denomination. The Cleveland Conference selected him unanimously to serve as the Publishing Agent for the Wesleyans and assigned him with creating a Wesleyan Book Concern. This Book Concern, like the Methodist Episcopal Book Concern, would be responsible for the printing, publication, and distribution of religious materials for the denomination. Scott would also collect money for book

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[24] "To Our Readers.," *True Wesleyan*, August 31, 1844, vol. 2, no. 35, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[25] "Sickness in the Editor's Family. – Shocking Accident!," *True Wesleyan*, August 31, 1844, vol. 2, no. 35, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott ended this story by urging parents to not keep "kettles or tea-kettles of hot water on the hearth of stoves, to which young children have access."

orders and help fulfill those orders by ensuring that ministers and members who ordered books received them. Scott was also tasked with assuming editorial duties for the *True Wesleyan* in Luther Lee's absence.[26]

Scott was a logical choice. Given his penchant for selling books, he had a proven record in the book business. He was also exceedingly ambitious and saw the construction of a viable Book Concern as one of the best ways that the Wesleyans could complete with their former church. His tenure at the Book Concern, which lasted from the end of 1844 until the months prior to his death, was met with mixed results. His ambition proved to simultaneously be a crucial asset and crippling weakness. He envisioned an institution that could inculcate a reading culture within the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. This required the publication and distribution of a broad platform of antislavery, religious, and theological books as well as newspapers intended to supplement to the *True Wesleyan* by targeting young Wesleyans and ministers. The *Juvenile Wesleyan* served as the connection's paper for young and adolescent members and the *Pulpit* became its periodical for ministers.

The challenge came when grand vision intersected with economic reality. Scott believed in urgency and felt that the denomination needed to establish and institutionalize a Book Concern as quickly as possible. This was a project the general conference had budgeted between $10,000 and $20,000 dollars, and they expected to raise funds through stockholders and voluntary contributions from Wesleyan members. Scott, however, was partly uncomfortable with relying solely on the stock plain as a source of capital, and he accompanied the general conference's plan with an appeal for Wesleyans to immediately support it themselves. In that respect, however, he miscalculated. His tenure as Publishing Agent was frequently met with appeals in

[26] Scott assumed editorial duties in late March 1845 while Lee traveled to Leicester, Massachusetts.

his corner of the *True Wesleyan* calling on – and sometimes shaming – Wesleyans to pull their weight.[27]

Scott nevertheless embraced his new position with alacrity. He brought order to the Wesleyan book business by consolidating available books for sale and routinely publishing lists of available works in the *True Wesleyan*. Within less than a month on the job, Scott put out his first revised list of books at the Wesleyan Book Store, which had already been relocated to No. 5 Spruce Street in New York City. To encourage sale among the ministry, Scott offered preachers and wholesale purchasers a 25% discount on nearly every published work sold by the church. This maiden list offered a host of religious material that included his first wife's autobiography, Eusebius' history of the early Christian church, and Richard Watson's *Apology*. Although this list did not yet include significant abolitionist material, Cassius M. Clay's *True American* and Abigail Mott's *Biographical Sketches* could be found for sale. Eventually, the Book Concern struck a deal with Lewis Tappan in April 1846 that led to a massive influx of antislavery material into the Book Concern's depositories.[28] Scott also furnished works and material written by Charles Finney, Seth Sprague, Luther Lee, Jotham Horton, and himself. The list, he announced, was not final and he assured readers that books would be added "as the wants of the connection

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[27] O. Scott, "Wesleyan Methodist Book Concern.," *True Wesleyan*, November 23, 1844, vol. 2, no. 47, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). The Agent, "To the Ministers and Members of the Wesleyan Connection of America.," *True Wesleyan*, November 23, 1844, vol. 2, no. 47, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[28] "Great Purchase of Books!", *True Wesleyan*, May 9, 1846, vol. 4, no. 19, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott obtained $3,000 worth of antislavery books from Tappan at a discount, enabling the Book Concern to sell them for half their original retail prices. This inventory included antislavery material from both sides of the Atlantic and included works by John Quincy Adams, Lydia Maria Child, James G. Birney, the Grimke sisters, and Harriet Martineau. The Book Concern also sold a biography of Granville Sharpe. These works, in Scott's telling, "contain the eternal, unchangeable principles of truth, and form an early history of the anti-slavery enterprise." In July 1846, Scott offered his opinions on some of them. He called John Quincy Adams' letters "sound and able," said the Grimke sisters' Appeal was "a powerful document," told readers Harriet Martineau had written "a large and valuable pamphlet," he touted the Granville Sharpe biography as "an interesting book." When the Book Concern acquired *Slavery As It Is*, Scott added, "Could 100,000 copies of this work be circulated through the nation, ..." See Agent, "LIST of Anti-Slavery Books & Pamphlets.," *True Wesleyan*, July 18, 1846, vol. 4, no. 29, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

seem to require."[29] By April 1845, Scott and the Book Concern had established book depositories in Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, New York, and Ann Arbor, with Cyrus Prindle overseeing an unofficial depository in North Ferrisburgh, Vermont.[30] Scott also launched *The Pulpit* in April 1845.[31]

During this time, Scott did not merely stay at home or in the Wesleyan offices writing appeals for money. He took an active interest in not only the Book Concern, but the overall long-term health of the new denomination. During 1845, he made a trip out West to oversee the state of the small Wesleyan communities. He first, however, began with a journey across New England from December 23, 1844, to January 29, 1845, visiting Newbury, Vermont on January 14 and delivering a sermon to the Methodist community there on the conversion of the Jews, a subject which had become of greater interest to him since his short-lived retirement. Five days later, he arrived in Lowell to celebrate the Sabbath with his former congregation, touting in a letter to Luther Lee that the Wesleyans numbered "six or seven hundred." He then traveled to Boston for a preachers' meeting of their annual conference on January 21-22 before returning to Lowell on January 23 to serve on a committee pursuing the establishment of a religious academy at Dracut, Massachusetts outside Lowell.[32] Two days later, he was in Duxbury, Massachusetts

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[29] *True Wesleyan*, December 28, 1844, vol. 2, no. 52, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021; Agent, "Books.," True Wesleyan, December 21, 1844, vol. 2, no. 51, p. 4, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott eventually made Wesley's *Thoughts Upon Slavery* available by the end of March 1845. See "Untitled.," True Wesleyan, March 29, 1845, vol. 3, no. 13, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[30] "Wesleyan Meth. Book Depositories.," *True Wesleyan*, April 5, 1845, vol. 3, no. 14, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). This was still very much a work in progress in April. Scott noted that they were still working to supply depositories and "make these depositories what they ought to be." He assured readers they could already find "Bibles and Testaments of all sizes, Concordances, &c., &c.," with more material on the way."

[31] Publisher, "Prospectus of the 'The Pulpit.,'" *True Wesleyan*, April 12, 1845, vol. 3, no. 15, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott also envisioned this periodical serving "the Christian public", with a price of $1 per year. The maiden number included a sermon from Luther Lee as well as tips for the construction of sermons. See "Untitled," *True Wesleyan*, April 19, 1845, vol. 3, no. 16, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[32] O. Scott, "Bro. Scott's Tour to New England.," *True Wesleyan*, February 8, 1845, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 3; O. Scott, *True Wesleyan*, December 28, 1844, vol. 2, no. 52, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott served on a committee for the Wesleyan Institution at Dracut alongside Wesleyans like La Roy Sunderland, Lucius Matlack, Seth Sprague, Jr., and Jotham Horton. Lowell layman Leonard Huntress also served on the committee.

and attended a love feast while raising money for the Book Concern. In a manner that characterized much of his fundraising in the *True Wesleyan*, he tried to motivate readers by touting that Seth Sprague, Sr. and Seth Sprague, Jr. had together raised $1,450 for the Book Concern. "Now, if our brethren elsewhere will take hold of the subject, as Wesleyans should, we shall soon obtain the amount we desire, to carry on the business successfully," he wrote, adding that, "This noble auxiliary to our greatest enterprise MUST be sustained."[33]

In February, Scott continued his travels across New England, preaching for the Wesleyans in Boston and the Episcopal Methodists in Newbury before returning to New York by the end of the month.[34] In the weeks and months that followed, Scott set out on a comprehensive tour of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection that saw him travel out to the western states. But he first began this trip by visiting the eastern conferences in the connection. From April 16-21, Scott returned to Lowell to attend the New England Wesleyan Conference. He spoke little of his time there other than to say he was glad that an effort to establish a competitor to the *True Wesleyan* had failed and that he had preached at the Congregational Church in the city. After his business in Lowell was concluded, he departed on April 21 for the Champlain Conference, the Wesleyan yearly conference in Vermont.[35]

During this portion of the trip, Scott's health began to decline, although he found his stay in Vermont to be a pleasant one. He used the opportunity to confer with Cyrus Prindle in person about a hymn book project that he had been working to finish, assuring *True Wesleyan*

This January meeting was intended to be the first of several meetings by the committee. As Scott wrote in his announcement, he explained the significance. "We MUST take hold of the cause of Education *in earnest*."

[33] Scott, "Bro. Scott's Tour to New England.," 3.

[34] O. Scott, "Wesleyans in Boston.," *True Wesleyan*, March 15, 1845, vol. 3, no. 11, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott praised the Newbury Methodists and the seminary there that he promoted shortly seceding. "In this beautiful village, the old church have a flourishing and valuable literary institution."

[35] O. Scott, "New England Wesleyan Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, April 26, 1845, vol. 3, no. 17, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

subscribers they could expect the completed version soon. His time in Vermont in April was divided between four major towns: North Ferrisburgh, Shelburne, Middlebury, and Bradford. In all four places, Scott delivered sermons, with his preaching in North Ferrisburgh taking place at the town's Methodist Episcopal Church. His preaching in Shelburne was attended by the former antislavery senator and sitting governor, William Slade, whom Scott favorably described as "both a religious and very worthy man." Like the New England Conference, the Champlain Conference suffered from a ministerial shortage. Nevertheless, the conference afforded Scott the opportunity to reconnect with his brother, Ephraim, who was attending the conference as one of their Wesleyan delegates. During his brief stay in Bradford at the end of April, he helped organize a new Wesleyan community composed of "ten or twelve first rate members."[36]

Even as he traveled, Scott continued to oversee the Book Concern's operations as its principal agent. In fact, those responsibilities had partly necessitated traveling to the various annual conferences. But the Book Concern continued to struggle with raising adequate funds. Originally, Scott adopted two distinct plans since he was averse to the policy he termed "The 'begging,' or 'donation' system." These proposals were the joint stock plan, which would raise money in $100 increments and pay donors back with interest, and the deposit plan. Ultimately, others came up with potential solutions that proved more popular and effective. These plans instead relied on campaigns to raise small-dollar funds. This idea first emerged in March 1845, when T.S. Dayton met with Scott at the Wesleyan office in New York City to suggest that the church could raise $2500 dollars for the Book Concern on a model of five-dollar subscriptions paid by the annual conferences, with reimbursements taking place in the form of books. Scott

[36] O. Scott, "Champlain Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, May 17, 1845, vol. 3, no. 20, p. 3. "Champlain Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, May 17, 1845, vol. 3, no. 20, p. 2. O. Scott, "Our Cause in Bradford, Vt.," *True Wesleyan*, May 24, 1845, vol. 3, no. 21, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

supported the plan and immediately convened a meeting with several ministers, including Schuyler Hoes and Edward Smith, who likewise endorsed it. By Scott's own admission, neither he nor any of the other leaders had even considered a grassroots-style campaign of fundraising. Scott subsequently urged ministers to bring the Dayton plan to congregations across the connection, believing "small" contributions could be "of immense importance to our infant Concern" in the "aggregate."[37] He also felt this plan would help women play a key role in aiding the Book Concern and the connection generally. His call for support in the *True Wesleyan* referenced several cities that he believed had potential to raise significant sums of money, but he singled out Lowell among them all; "we think Lowell will be the banner city."[38]

Shortly after promoting the Dayton plan, Scott wrote another appeal in April 1845 urging Wesleyans to do more for the Book Concern. He opened by arguing that the five-dollar plan and his general requests for financial aid had failed to garner enough support because of one of three possibilities: readers did not read his Book Agent department in the newspaper, they had forgotten what he wrote, or they were too apathetic. Scott clarified that he was not necessarily looking for donations; he only wanted people to invest in the stock plan, offer the church loans, or grant deposits. He promised them that any money they gave to support the Book Concern would be "*refunded*, both principal and interest." Scott then explained the dire financial

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[37] O. Scott, "An Appeal.," *True Wesleyan*, April 5, 1845, vol. 3, no. 14, p. 3. Agent, "New Proposition.," *True Wesleyan*, March 15, 1845, *True Wesleyan*, March 15, 1845, vol. 3, no. 11, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[38] Agent, "New Proposition.," *True Wesleyan*, March 15, 1845, *True Wesleyan*, March 15, 1845, vol. 3, no. 11, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott, however, clarified that this plan would not "supersede the regular 'stock plan' and envisioned both being implemented to help stabilize the Book Concern's finances. The following week, Scott already took to promoting the "five dollar proposition" as he termed it, asking readers, "What have you done about it? Don't let it get cold." He again did this on March 29, 1845, calculating that if only 500 of the 20,000 Wesleyans in the nation adopted the plan that it would "help us much." Furthermore, he warned readers their Book Concern would otherwise he "*crippled* for want of aid, if that aid does not come *soon*." "Untitled.," *True Wesleyan*, March 22, 1845, vol. 3, no. 12, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). "The Five Dollar Plan.," *True Wesleyan*, March 29, 1845, vol. 3, no. 13, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

predicament: the church had expected to raise $10,000 in the months after the Cleveland Conference in October 1844 but had barely raised a thousand as of April 1845. “I have been surprised, mortified, and disappointed, that my brethren have manifested so much sluggishness in reaction to endowing the infant Book Concern,” he wrote, adding that Wesleyans should prioritize their duty over what he termed “*perfect convenience*.” At the same time, however, Scott did not simply lecture readers to give more of their own money; he also invested $1000 of his own money in the Book Concern at the same time.[39]

After visiting Vermont in the spring, Scott returned to New York City to attend the New York Conference, arriving at the gathering on May 30. He participated in proceedings and was appointed to the committee on books and the committee on the organization of a missionary society.[40] After the conference ended in early June 1845, he departed New York City for the St. Lawrence Conference in Lisbon, New York. Although Scott only attended the first two days, he nevertheless took an interest in ensuring these yearly conferences did more to passive support the Book Concern. He lauded the Champlain Conference for their “strong resolutions” on the subject. By contrast, the St. Lawrence Conference “recommended” that Scott adopt the donation system that he had resisted for months. In response, Scott held a meeting at his office of June 23, shortly after his return from the conference, to determine a course of action. Eventually, he

[39] O. Scott, “An Appeal.,” *True Wesleyan*, April 5, 1845, vol. 3, no. 14, p. 3. “Subscribers to the Wesleyan.,” *True Wesleyan*, April 5, 1845, vol. 3, no. 14, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott made this section a recurring feature in the Book Agent’s Department and rewarded patrons of the Book Concern with praise. On April 5, 1845, he touted Seth Sprague, Jr. and Sr.’s donations of a combined $1450 as well as those who had signed onto the Five-Dollar Plan.

[40] “New York Yearly Conference.,” *True Wesleyan*, June 7, 1845, vol. 3, no. 23, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). The conference began on May 28 and the wording of the proceedings – “Brother O. Scott appeared and took his seat in the Conference.” – strongly suggests he was late. Scott did not abandon the idea of missions, despite earlier failures to sustain a Wesleyan missionary organization. He served as chairman on that committee, and, during the summer of 1845, put out a notice in the *True Wesleyan* of plans to organize a new society on August 3, 1845. See O. Scott, “Missionary Movement.,” *True Wesleyan*, July 5, 1845, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

yielded to the St. Lawrence Conference's suggestion and decided to supplement his financial plans with a donation-based model. Nevertheless, Scott remained frustrated. While traveling, he had frequently noted that Wesleyans were funding new houses of worship. This proved to Scott that the connection had the resources to sustain the Book Concern but had left it "mostly forgotten, or neglected!"[41]

Although Scott had largely withdrawn from the national antislavery movement, that did not mean he was entirely forgotten. During his tours of New England and New York, both he and Luther Lee received a letter from committee composed of Salmon P. Chase, James G. Birney, and other western abolitionists offering them "a special invitation" to attend a southern and western convention in Cincinnati on June 11, 1845. Given Scott's obligations to attend the St. Lawrence Conference at that same time, Lee relayed that it would be "impossible" for either of them to attend.[42] Instead, Scott's trip to the west took place in the second half of the year. On July 1, he promised to attend "most of the Western Conferences – *possibly* all." By July 10, Scott had largely fixed his schedule, planning to travel to Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, and Michigan from August through October.[43] But the antislavery convention invitation underscores that Liberty Party abolitionists continued to regard Scott as one of their own.

Scott spent the balance of July in Newbury with his family, hoping "to rest a little, and prepare for my western tour." This period of calm did not mark a reprieve from work; he spent

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[41] "Untitled.," *True Wesleyan*, June 21, 1845, vol. 3, no. 25, p. 3; O. Scott, "Book Concern.," *True Wesleyan*, June 28, 1845, vol. 3, no. 26, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[42] "A Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, May 10, 1845, vol. 3, no. 19, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[43] "Michigan Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, July 5, 1845, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 3. O. Scott, "Wesleyan Conferences.," True Wesleyan, July 19, 1845, vol. 3, no. 29, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott intended to travel to the Miami Conference in New Garden, Indiana on August 15, the Illinois Conference on August 28 at Indian Creek, Illinois, the Wisconsin Conference on September 11 at Union School House west of Burlington, Iowa, the Allegheny Conference on September 24 at Leesville, Ohio, and the Michigan County on October 8 at Ann Arbor, Michigan. He posted this schedule with some suggested date revisions to better facilitate his travels, such as asking for the Illinois and Wisconsin conferences to delay their conferences by one day.

most of his time at home supervising the printing of books for the Book Concern. By his own admission, his health had remained in a poor state since his original tour of New England. He had also continued to preach, delivering sermons for Wesleyan Methodists, Freewill Baptists, and even Episcopal Methodists. Scott stayed in Vermont until he traveled to New York City on August 3 to organize an official missionary society for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. He had planned this meeting and he played an active role in it, serving as chair and being selected as the new organization's treasurer. As had been the case with his ill-fated missionary society earlier in the decade, Scott became a life member of the new organization.[44] Afterwards, he set out for the west and recorded his subsequent travels in a series of letters to Luther Lee.

Scott first traveled to Indiana to attend the Miami Conference in mid-August before departing for the Illinois Conference on August 19. Scott largely divided his time between preaching, missionary business, and fulfilling his obligations as publishing agent by collecting moneys. He arrived at Indian Creek, Illinois on August 28 in time for a camp meeting that would precede the Illinois Conference's annual conference. Once the conference adjourned, he set for Iowa to attend the Wisconsin Conference. He arrived on September 11 but spent most of his time in Iowa bedridden with a severe case of what he termed "asthma and the fever" that he classified as "semi-death." He then made a trip of 900 miles – about 750 of which were on land – to arrive at the Alleghany Conference in Leesville, Ohio and stopped in Springfield, Illinois and Cambridge, Ohio along the way. Nevertheless, Scott apologized to the conference for his "*eleventh* hour" absence, an apology which Edward Smith, the president of the conference, responded to with a joke that "it was only the *seventh*...." After preaching before a "Full house"

[44] O. Scott, "Visit to New England.," *True Wesleyan*, August 2, 1845, vol. 3, no. 31, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). "The Missionary Meeting.," *True Wesleyan*, August 9, 1845, vol. 3, no. 32, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

at the conference, Scott departed for Cleveland and arrived there on October 2. After spending the next few days in the city, he reached Detroit on October 7 and Ann Arbor on noon the following day. He left the Michigan annual conference on October 14 and returned to Detroit to take a steamboat to Buffalo and then Albany before making his way back to New York City on October 18.[45]

During the Michigan Conference, A.W. Curtis forwarded a circular to Scott on behalf of the American Home Colonization Society, requesting that he reply to their plan to implement colonization on American soil. Scott's reply, which did not come until February 1846, was revealing. While he admitted that he understood the idea of creating a space where African Americans could escape southern slavery and northern racism, he ultimately opposed the society's plan. He feared it was not done to help Blacks escape persecution but instead "make a pen" and "shut them up by themselves, ..." In his view, that plan rested on a "prejudice of caste" that was indistinguishable from old colonization. "It is the same old Coon in a new guise," he wrote, arguing that it would make more sense to promote expatriation among "the whites of the South" since "The poor colored people of the South, have cleared and cultivated the land...." He reiterated and reaffirmed the creed to which he had publicly advocated since 1835: "have nothing to do with this new born scheme of caste and negro hatred, ... Let there be no compromise.... Let our motto ever be, universal freedom and equal rights, upon the soil!"[46]

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[45] O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, October 18, 1845, vol. 3, no. 42, p. 3. O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, September 6, 1845, vol. 3, no. 36, p. 3; September 20, 1845, vol. 3, no. 38, p. 3; October 4, 1845, vol. 3, no. 40, p. 3; October 18, 1845, vol. 3, no. 42, p. 3; October 25, 1845, vol. 3, no. 43, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). This includes the complete collection of Scott's account of his trip out to the West. It should be noted that Scott in general struggled with poor health. His health after 1845 began a marked and irrevocable decline. Scott at first refused to see a physician until Wesleyans, concerned for his health, pressured him to do so.

[46] O. Scott, "American Home Colonization Society.," *True Wesleyan*, March 7, 1846, vol. 4, no. 9, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott continued, "Let us accept of nothing short of *immediate* and *unconditional* emancipation, leaving it optional with the emancipated to select their own place of location."

One of the most noteworthy elements of Scott's account of the West is his generally favorable review of it. Outside of the Cincinnati Conference in 1836 and his trips to western Pennsylvania, Scott had largely confined himself to New England and New York.[47] Although he was largely unimpressed with Indiana, he found Illinois to be "the most delightful country I ever beheld." Scott, having spent his early life as a farmer, was impressed with the abundant and cheap crops, the availability of hay and pasturable lands for cattle and sheep, and "excellent" roads. His review of the West became so effusive that Luther Lee, when remarking on his letter, observed that "Bro. Scott appears to be quite in his element in the West." Perhaps the only thing that Scott did not like about the West were its fevers, given his experience in Iowa. "If I must have fevers, I much prefer 'Yankee fevers,' in the management of which I have more experience and skill," he remarked dryly.[48]

Scott was very impressed with the people in the West. While in Indiana, he touted that the Miami Conference paid more money in cash for missionary labors than the New York Conference and saw it as proof that "the Wesleyans in America are destined to outstrip all other denominations in this country in the cause of missions, ..." At the Illinois Conference, Scott touted that a "small and feeble" conference had purchased subscriptions to the *True Wesleyan*, the *Juvenile Wesleyan*, and Pulpit and even pledged $63 to the Book Concern. "This I call doing pretty well for so small a conference," he remarked. He raised another $588 at the Allegheny Conference and praised its members for being "*ultra* in raising Missionary money, ..." And when he saw how the Michigan Conference, taking the lead of an unnamed graduate from

[47] 1845 was the first year Scott celebrated a new year outside of New England. See Agent, "New Year's in New York.," *True Wesleyan*, January 17, 1846, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[48] O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, September 20, 1845, vol. 3, no. 38, p. 3. O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, October 4, 1845, vol. 3, no. 40, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Oberlin, planned to create their own religious institution, he could only help but marvel how "Our brethren in the West are much in advance of our friends in the East, in point of *funds*."[49] For Scott, this was paradigm-shifting. In his view, it had always been New England that had "given tone to every important enterprise in the nation...." Yet that region, despite all its "temporal ability," had fallen behind the West in support for missions and religious education.[50]

During his journey, Scott also befriended J.W. Walker, a Wesleyan minister from Cleveland who attended both the Miami and Alleghany Conferences. Walker proved to be an ally and supporter of Scott's efforts during both yearly conferences, especially on the cause of missions. Scott left highly impressed with Walker's commitment to the Wesleyans, citing him as one of three ministers who were proof that the missionary cause did not need to "despair."[51] Walker also became a frequent correspondent for the *True Wesleyan*, furnishing it with religious intelligence and commentary on issues like slavery.

Although his life became consumed with the world of business, Scott did not completely withdraw from the realm of ideas. His Book Agent Department occasionally included musings on current events. On February 8, 1845, Scott had to deny a rumor that he had broken with the Wesleyans over secret societies, insisting he had only belonged to one such institution in his

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[49] O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, October 25, 1845, vol. 3, no. 43, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[50] O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, September 6, 1845, vol. 3, no. 36, p. 3. O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, September 20, 1845, vol. 3, no. 38, p. 3. O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, October 18, 1845, vol. 3, no. 42, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, October 25, 1845, 3. While Scott had faith in New England righting the ship, he nevertheless said of the West, "I must confess my sympathies incline to those portions of the country where I see the most enterprise, and the greatest sacrifice."

[51] O. Scott, "Correspondence of the Book Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, October 18, 1845, vol. 3, no. 42, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Speaking of Edward Smith and Walker, Scott said, "I can assure you brother [Edward] Smith is not a whit behind him [Walker]; he is 'a whole team and horse to let.' As a missionary beggar, I believe I never saw his equal." Scott later brought up this friendly rivalry when reporting that Smith had received 9 new subscribers for the *True Wesleyans*, and supposed nobody could beat that number "unless brother Walker beats him." See *True Wesleyan*, January 31, 1846, vol. 4, no. 5, p. 3.

early twenties.[52] In March 1845, for example, he voiced doubts about Texas annexation. A month later, he offered a follow-up of sorts to his controversial editorial on disunion and defined his understanding of patriotism. For Scott, "purely republican patriotism" was egalitarian in that it rejected "distinctions and preferments among men," opposed "corrupt, national policy," and supported "an equitable system of government" run by "men of suitable abilities, of sound political principles, of great magnanimity and moral worth, ..."[53]

In November and December, roughly a month after returning from his tour of the West, Scott commenced writing a series of essays – some of the last he would ever write – entitled "'Advice to the People Called' Wesleyans." This work, published on the first page of the *True Wesleyan*, outlined Scott's vision for the fledgling denomination. At once, the document reflected where Scott saw the Wesleyan Methodists in 1845 and what he believed they could become in the future. By withdrawing from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Scott acknowledged that the old institution he had spent so much energy trying to conserve could no longer be salvaged and that the only way to preserve its principles was to remake the church. The Wesleyans, then, were, in Scott's view, a reborn Methodist church that could commence the work of the Wheel of Reform. "So far as the slave question is concerned, other churches are following our example," he wrote, adding that "Northern religion will soon cease to give its influence to slavery; and Southern religion, when it shall be made to feel the united frowns of Christendom, will flee from the hopeless contest." After this had been achieved, the wheel could finally roll forward. "Then follows the redemption of our countrymen!" he proclaimed. Yet he also encouraged Wesleyans to check their enthusiasm by standing united even in disagreement.

[52] O. Scott, "False Report.," February 8, 1845, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[53] "Texas Not Yet Annexed.," *True Wesleyan*, March 29, 1845, vol. 3, no. 13, p. 3; "Patriotism.," *True Wesleyan*, April 19, 1845, vol. 3, no. 16, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

He warned them to temper their zeal for reform with considerations of prudence. "Let the cause of reform be constantly onward," he wrote, "but let it proceed with sufficient caution to ensure its triumphant success."[54] Even in Scott's later years, his radicalism was always tempered by his conservative tendencies.

At the core of Scott's advice to the Wesleyans was a crucial theme that characterized his final public controversy: a debate with many of his supporters who had been influenced by modern Garrisonianism. His calls for toleration for differing opinions and his emphasis on prudence in pursuit of reform would, in time, anger some of his more zealous followers. Yet Scott, in this essay, revealed the underlying reason for this disagreement. "And are we doing all we can for the regeneration of a dying world?" he asked before offering his answer: "Is Christ and him crucified our theme?"[55] This was the clear distinction. Some of the more Garrisonian Wesleyans had embraced Wesleyan Methodism because it was an abolitionist church. For Scott, however, this understanding inverted everything. The church was abolitionist because it was Christian. Abolitionism was a manifestation of one's Christian faith. He urged Wesleyans to remember that they were a Christian church with abolitionism rather than abolitionism with a Christian church.

In his second essay, Scott turned to the question of holiness. The Wesleyan Methodists, he explained, stood on the shoulders of earlier reformers like John Wesley and Martin Luther. Again, Scott highlighted the connection between faith and action. Religious reformers had challenged churches that were "corrupt, worldly, wicked" and resisted "the storm of opposition from the Establishment and the devil, ..." For Scott, the question of holiness was the intersection

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[54] O. Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," *True Wesleyan*, December 6, 1845, vol. 3, no. 49, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[55] Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," 1.

of faith and works: it was a convergence of what he termed "*holiness of heart and life*" that could be understood by a simple question, "The doctrine of holiness has become popular, but is it *felt* and *lived* as aforetime?"[56]

The Wesleyans had a clear directive: "*to save all the souls we can*." This vocation required sacrifice of wealth, pleasure, and the things of the world. Although Scott had taken an insular course since 1840, his pivot had not necessarily amounted to a retreat from the world or a withdrawal from the cause of reform. He was creating a religious community and spiritual remnant that could eventually transform the nation. "The sacrifice offered for us is too costly to allow of any compromise on our part, in carrying out the great principles of the religion of the crucified Son of God," he wrote in his third essay, urging readers that the Wesleyans were "a band of missionaries – a band of persecuted suffering brothers, united by the strongest bonds for the overthrow of every thing opposed to our Master's kingdom."[57]

Scott was careful to note that the Wesleyans had not done something new. Instead, he wanted to rebuild and restore what had been lost. The Wesleyans, then, had not innovated; they "*essentially renovated*" so they could "walk in the steps of our noble predecessors."[58] This perspective, however, culminated with Scott's condemnation of sectarianism in his fourth and final essay. "But there is a vast difference between a sect, and what is technically called sectarianism," he wrote, imploring the Wesleyans to avoid the twin extremes of the "idolatrous worship of sect" and the complete rejection of sect that resulted in "uprooting of all church

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[56] O. Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," *True Wesleyan*, December 13, 1845, vol. 3, no. 50, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). This aligned with the Wesleyan Discipline, which considered works a manifestation of faith.
[57] O. Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," *True Wesleyan*, December 20, 1845, vol. 3, no. 51, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[58] Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," 1. Scott urged Wesleyans to put the "interests of Christ and his church" ahead of everything else. "There must be a deeper sense of moral obligation, before we can expect any very great degree of prosperity," he instructed.

organizations."[59] Scott adopted a moderate position by noting that not all "improvements" were "*innovations*" but warning Wesleyans against rejecting fellow Christians over disagreements on "ecclesiastical economy." He made this perspective explicit, in part writing:

> Let us never seem to act on the principle that there are not good Christians, and many of them, in other churches – and even in those whose general economy we feel bound to oppose. While we love those in our own communion, ... and while we labor to build up the churches into the Connection to which we belong, let us not do this because we are a *sect*, but because we are a branch of the great Master's family. ... Let us consider ourselves only a small and feeble detachment of the main army of King Jesus – rejoicing when success crowns Christian efforts in any section of the great moral battle-field – and mourning when a soldier falls, either by the allurements of earth, the corruptions of the heart, or the devices of hell. Let us never rejoice in the misfortunes of other churches, but rejoice in devils can be cast out even by those who follow us not. Let us co-operate heartily with all evangelical churches in reforming these lands, and in spreading scriptural holiness through the world. Let no walls of prejudice ever exist between us and other Christian denominations. Let sectarian exclusiveness never attach to a Wesleyan pulpit or a Wesleyan church. But standing on the broad platform of our common Christianity, let us extend to the ambassadors and followers of Christ, the courtesies which naturally emanate from a religion which makes all one in Christ Jesus.[60]

For Scott, the purpose of the Wesleyans had not been to supplant or destroy the other churches, but to make them the best and purest versions of themselves by impelling them to act in accordance with their shared Christian principles.

Scott continued to manage the Book Concern in 1845 through its financial difficulties. The Wesleyans had reaffirmed a commitment to the Book Concern at their 1845 general conference and called on raising $20,000 for it. By January 1846, Scott had raised no more than $2500. In another lengthy essay on the subject, published on January 3, 1846, he once again made an appeal for financial support, supposing that he had evidently not "made the impression which ought to be made." Scott, however, continued to make his frustrations evident, adding that

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[59] O. Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," *True Wesleyan*, December 27, 1845, vol. 3, no. 52, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[60] Scott, "'Advice to the People called' Wesleyans.," 1.

he had expected raising $10,000 would be a simple matter for "the followers of Wesley – true Wesleyans...." While Scott had relented on donations, his emphasis on investments in this essay illustrates his continued commitment to adopt traditional business practices of "principal and interest." When discussing the donation system that had been promoted by the St. Lawrence Conference, he told readers that he had received "few dollars" since the fall. And most of that money had come from a single western conference.[61]

The financial plight of the Book Concern worsened to the point where Scott was forced to publish a collection of Wesley's sermons - a cost of $2000 - entirely on credit. He aptly summarized the issue: "how can we do business this way, without capital? We must sell books on credit, or not at all. Could we sell our publications for cash, we could get along. But this cannot be done." Wesleyan ministers, who ordered books on behalf of their congregations to take advantage of the 25% discount that Scott had put in place, did not have the income to make these purchases. "We want ready capital to meet our expenses," he urged the Wesleyans, "and we *must* have it." This ultimately, however, led Scott to employ the final tool in his arsenal: his declining health. "If our brethren abroad knew the anxieties of the agent," he wrote of himself, "I am sure they would rally to his help, ... His labors, anxieties and sacrifices in this cause are ... hastening him to a premature grave – and that rapidly." While Scott implored readers to give him "new years *presents,*" he ended on a foreboding note by informing them this was "*a last call*" and asking, "Will you leave him [Scott] to die alone and single handed?"[62]

The issue of Scott's mortality become an increasing consideration for him and for many of his friends and allies in the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1846 and 1847. He had

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[61] O. Scott, "To the Wesleyan Methodist Connection.," *True Wesleyan*, January 3, 1846, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021)

[62] Scott, "To the Wesleyan Methodist Connection.," 2. In a comment after this article, Scott added that he "hopes not to be under the necessity of occupying so much room in his business matters hereafter."

constantly been at work since his quasi-retirement ended in 1842 and he began to pay the price for it. As seen during the years preceding the Wesleyan secession, Scott was a workaholic in the truest sense of the term. He spent more time at the pulpit, at conferences, at conventions, and at revivals than he did in his own home and with his own family. When home, he spent most of his time in his office. He was zealous in advocating causes which he believed to be right and did not allow personal or even professional considerations stand in the way. When reflecting on how he spent his New Years' Day that year, he noted he "kept to his New England habits, and spent the day in close application to business, in his office, accompanied most of the time by the editor."[63] Not only was he willing to be unpopular or reviled by others, but he was also, until 1846, completely unconcerned with his own physical well-being.

Reality forced Scott to relinquish a little responsibility for the Book Concern to others in 1846. Rather than being an institution run almost entirely by Scott and his closest allies, the Book Concern would also be managed by a Wesleyan Association. This Association would be composed of stockholders – those investors on the stock plan – and would meet annually to "exercise a general oversight, over the affairs of the Concern" and advise Scott and the Book Committee.[64]

Scott's appeals generated some momentum. Three days after the appeal went to press, William Martin, a New York Wesleyan, personally went into Scott's office and invested $100 on the stock plan. Two weeks later, Edward Smith, then the president of Allegheny Conference, took a more active role in helping Scott sustain the Book Concern. Hoping to galvanize

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[63] Agent, "New Year's in New York.," *True Wesleyan*, January 17, 1846, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott disliked how New Yorkers treated the day by shutting down businesses and not working, which he deemed "a ridiculous farce!" but said he could take consolation that at least the city had "one such series of *holy* days...."
[64] O. Scott, "Wesleyan Book Concern.," *True Wesleyan*, January 3, 1846, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021)

Wesleyans, Smith wrote a series of essays urging swift action. Although these articles were intended for the entire connection, he implored western Wesleyans to take the lead. "We have been charged by our Eastern friends with being too radical," he wrote, "Let us prove to them that we are radical in earnest." He advocated a revolutionary donation-based model for the Book Concern that came to be known as the "Fifty Cents Donation Plan."[65] As the name suggested, this plan revolved around raising fifty cents from every member of the connection, which Smith and Scott believed would help spread the financial burden evenly, reduce costs of products by removing interest as an expense, and keep the church from being beholden to investors. Scott endorsed Smith's plan and his essays. "*Read them*," he entreated, "And not only read them, but reduce them to *practise*."[66]

Nevertheless, Scott's health continued its marked decline to the point where his own friends and supporters began to take note. Lucius Matlack concluded that Scott's stubbornness and his insistent desire to work greatly contributed to the situation. In February, Scott departed New York to return home to Newbury in hopes of recovering. Thinking that a break from his responsibilities with the Book Concern would improve his health, Matlack endorsed sending Scott to London to attend a world convention of evangelical Christians in June 1846. He did not even speak with Scott prior to making the nomination, hoping that by taking his appeal directly to the Wesleyan community they could essentially draft Scott into going. While he principally framed this as a matter of ensuring that the Wesleyans had adequate representation, he ultimately arrived at what was assuredly the principal rationale for choosing Scott: "a relaxation from

[65] E. Smith, "The Book Concern.," *True Wesleyan*, January 24, 1846, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 3; E. Smith, "The Book Concern.," January 31, 1846, vol. 4, no. 5, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Smith wrote more on this subject in the February 14, 1846 and February 21, 1846 numbers of the *True Wesleyan*. He championed separate ten-dollar and fifty cents plans, both of which Scott supported.
[66] "Book Concern.," *True Wesleyan*, January 31, 1846, vol. 4, no. 5, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

business and a voyage across the Atlantic, would probably recover his health, and protract his valuable life many years."[67]

Matlack's timing was impeccable. Scott was away from the office for the period of a few weeks following this endorsement, which allowed Wesleyans to offer input before he could possibly decline. The initial reactions to the proposal, however, were somewhat mixed. O.D. Morse, a Wesleyan in Springfield, Massachusetts, immediately raised $10 from the church there to help support a potential voyage to London.[68] Another correspondent, Vertitas, was far more skeptical, both of Scott as a delegate and of the Wesleyans having a presence at the convention. With respect to the latter, he feared it was proslavery and cited that William Winans might attend. On the question of Scott's health, Veritas asked if Scott had the time to leave the Book Concern and wondered if the trip could even improve his health. Luther Lee, however, prefaced Veritas' article with a disclaimer that he could answer some of the questions but concluded that it would be "immodest" for him to do so. He left that matter to Lucius Matlack.[69] Others shared the views of these correspondents. "R.W.S." wrote on March 1 that while he was pessimistic of the convention, he felt Scott would be an ideal delegate if they sent someone because "his manly and independent course, may do good there, ..."[70] Another correspondent, however, opposed Scott as a delegate despite his belief that he would be "a Cicero in the World's Convention." This writer shared Veritas' concerns that the Wesleyans could not "spare him" because "The Book Concern

[67] Lucius C. Matlack, "The World's Convention, to Promote Christian Union; Orange Scott, A Delegate.," *True Wesleyan*, February 21, 1846, vol. 4, no. 8, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[68] O.D. Morse, "Letter from O.D. Morse.," *True Wesleyan*, March 14, 1846, vol. 4, no. 11, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[69] Veritas, "Light Wanted.," *True Wesleyan*, March 14, 1846, vol. 4, no. 11, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Lee later chose to make his personal views public in May, after Scott had faced an onslaught of criticisms for agreeing to attend a conference that would likely include slaveholders.
[70] R.W.S., "The World's Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, April 4, 1846, vol. 4, no. 14, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

wants his energies, ..."[71] Nevertheless, the New England Conference endorsed Scott as a delegate during their yearly conference, passing a resolution that declared the appointment was "a duty we owe him" on account of his "increasing ill health."[72]

Matlack continued to develop his counterargument against skeptics of the convention. Scott, Matlack reported on March 21, had agreed to attend the convention, and had even arranged for others to visit Wesleyan conferences in his place. For Matlack, Scott's attendance in London was essential. He could become one of "two or three living speaking monuments of American Reform before the European world" and could "vindicate the Christian character of American Wesleyanism."[73] Matlack also offered a direct reply to Veritas by making a personal appeal. He recounted a letter from Scott that brought him to tears and had ended with the phrase, "I am going to Newbury to get well or *die*."[74] "I am but little, except skin and bones," Scott had told Matlack.[75] Matlack then furnished a recent description of Scott for readers. "And when I received him..., and looked on that once vigorous form now enfeebled and emaciated, I felt many a sad foreboding, as to the alternative 'get well or die.' This was enough for me."[76] Addressing Veritas' concerns about a potential proslavery element in the convention, Matlack simply

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[71] N. Selby, "The World's Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, April 11, 1846, vol. 4, no. 15, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Selby did not see how "a single voyage" could make a difference for Scott's health.
[72] "New England Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, May 2, 1846, vol. 4, no. 18, p. 1; Lucius C. Matlack, "Delegates to the World's Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, May 2, 1846, vol. 4, no. 18, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). The New England Conference also nominated Jotham Horton to accompany Scott.
[73] Lucius C. Matlack, "The World's Convention.," *True Wesleyan*, March 21, 1846, vol. 4, no. 12, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[74] Lucius C. Matlack, "The 'Light Wanted' By Veritas.," *True Wesleyan*, March 21, 1846, vol. 4, no. 12, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[75] Orange Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 262-263. In this letter from January 24, 1846, Scott wrote that his health had been bad "for the last six or seven weeks" yet he had still kept working "hard" hours until midnight at his office, "poring over letters, answering correspondents, examining account-books, &c., &c." He shared his struggles with work to Matlack, admitting that "the God of nature has given me a mind so active that I cannot have been *un*employed." Even in Newbury, when he was supposed to be resting, he ended up working as hard or harder than in New York.
[76] According to Matlack, Scott wrote of the Convention, "I look upon that Convention as one of the most magnificent movements since the days of the Apostles!" and "I think it would improve my health to go to that convention, and I should like to go."

replied, "Action in relation to slavery would be far more likely if he [Scott] was present than otherwise." Scott later offered a reply of his own from Newbury, promising he would only go to the convention if he could so without harming the Book Concern and hoping the change in climate would help his health.[77]

Criticisms of Scott, however, were not confined to the Wesleyan Methodists. Garrison and his allies attacked Scott on the same grounds as Veritas. S.H. Gay's *National Anti-Slavery Standard* became one of the more critical organs. While Scott largely stayed away from renewing his earlier controversy with the Garrisonians, Luther Lee had no such reservations. In May, Lee unleashed a broadside reply against that paper and an editorial that had criticized Scott. Describing the *Standard* as "the organ of the No-Government and No-Church Abolitionists," Lee argued that Scott would only attend the World's Convention to "rebuke and expose all the pro-slavery religion of America and of the world." But Lee carried this further, taking aim at the impulse among Garrison's supporters to consider Scott a traitor to the antislavery movement. "Shall he who has fought a hundred battles, and sacrificed health and as many laurels as any man of his years ever wore, now sell himself to pro-slavery, for less than a mess of pottage?"[78]

Both Scott's "Advice" from 1845 and Matlack's nomination of Scott for the World's Convention inaugurated his final public debate with the more radical elements within his own church. These episodes are fundamentally interconnected. In his "Advice," Scott had criticized sectarianism; the World's Convention represented an embodiment of his ecumenical principles in action. John R. Spoor, penned a critical response to Scott about sectarianism, asking why they should regard the Methodist Episcopal Church as a Christian church if it tolerated slaveholders.

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[77] Matlack, "The 'Light Wanted' By Veritas.," p. 2. O. Scott, "'Light Wanted.,'" *True Wesleyan*, March 28, 1846, vol. 4, no. 13, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021)
[78] "Pro-Slavery – World's Convention – Rev. O. Scott.," *True Wesleyan*, May 23, 1846, vol. 4 no. 21, p. 2-3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

But for Scott, the errors of the church did not mean that its people were any less Christian or antislavery than their Wesleyan counterparts. “These brethren give every evidence that they are Christians, except in the act of withdrawing from those who walk disorderly,” he responded. They might be “*inconsistent*,” but hey were still “conscientious and sincere....” Moreover, Scott believed that they should not condemn those abolition Methodists who remained, because the Wesleyans had only recently been “laboring under the delusion ... that they can do more to reform the Church by remaining where they are.” To turn around and then “refuse to commune with any till they are in our judgement,” he worried, would be “to assume to ourselves a very high degree of infallibility.”[79]

A Wesleyan layman from Somerset, German Bush, shared similar frustrations over Scott’s call to adopt a more charitable and conciliatory approach when dealing with dissension. Calling this “a good piece of unqualified, or undefined, advice,” Bush articulated a more Garrisonian position in favor of harsh rhetoric against slavery. He feared Scott’s tone indicated that “the leaders of the Wesleyan Connection, [will] strike hands in Christian fellowship with pro-slavery churches, ...” Scott ultimately argued that harsh language alone was not the answer. “I think our young theologians ... would do much better to try and imitate some of the other virtues of Christ, than aim to equal, if not excel him in denunciations,” he wrote before clarifying his distinction between argument and argumentation with the motto, “‘Hard arguments but soft language,’ is the true doctrine.’”[80]

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[79] O. Scott, “Christian Union.,” *True Wesleyan*, March 28, 1846, vol. 4, no. 13, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott ended by urging Wesleyans to “be careful how we judge a good brother’s conscience, because he does not see, in all respects, as we do.”

[80] German Bush, A Layman, “Christian Union --- Hard Language.,” *True Wesleyan*, April 18, 1846, vol. 4, no. 16, p. 1. Publisher, “Christian Union --- Hard Language.,” *True Wesleyan*, April 18, 1846, vol. 4, no. 16, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (February 10, 2021). Scott subsequently alluded to the case where a person tried to catch flies with vinegar rather than honey. He then further clarified that his opposition to “that spirit of sectarianism, bigotry and censoriousness” did not mean he was “striking hands with oppressors, or of giving up one inch of ground for which he has contended. NO. Live or die, sink or swim, survive or perish, he will stand forth on the great and glorious

Scott's "Advice" continued to receive its detractors in the spring of 1846. One correspondent – almost certainly C.W. Walker – penned an article in April criticizing Scott's views of unity and fellowship. Walker's perspective differed from some of the initial criticisms because he went so far as wonder aloud if any church that tolerated slavery could be considered Christian. He even attacked the abolition Methodists who had stayed in the Methodist Episcopal Church, arguing that they "are partakers in the guilt of the Church...." His argument could be encapsulated by his conclusion: "I do not see the difference between fellowshipping a slaveholder or trader, and fellowshipping the man that communes with them."[81]

Scott did not fundamentally disagree with Walker. For example, he even conceded that Walker was correct that slaveholding churches were not Christian churches. His remarks went to great lengths to find common ground between them. Scott, however, outlined a clear line of demarcation that separated his worldview from the radicalism that defined Walker's more Garrisonian Wesleyanism. To Scott, Walker's premise rested on the supposition that antislavery Christians in proslavery churches were "disordered" or "wicked." He rejected that view. To him, they were simply "inconsistent." These were two distinct problems. Inconsistency could be rectified by helping a misguided person better apply their principles. By contrast, a wicked person needed new principles. This argument, however, is significant because it further reinforces Scott's view that abolitionism flowed from Christianity.[82] Walker's Wesleyanism

principles which have called our Connection into being. But let us be manly and noble-hearted in our contest for the truth once delivered to the saints. If we err at all, let it be on the side of Christian liberality and charity."

[81] W., "Unity, Fellowship, &c.," *True Wesleyan*, April 25, 1846, vol. 4, no. 17, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). This is likely Walker because he signed his name "W.," was from Cleveland – Walker's place of residence – and Scott prefaced his letter by identifying him as "a highly esteemed friend."

[82] O. Scott, ""Unity, Fellowship, &c.," *True Wesleyan*, April 25, 1846, vol. 4, no. 17, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Citing himself as an example, Scott argued that "I believe that I was as *good* a Christian when I was opposing this 'sum of all villainies' in Cincinnati in 1836, and in Baltimore in 1840, as I was when acting as a member of the General Convention in Utica in 1843,...I do not say I was as *consistent* a Christian." Later in this number, Scott reaffirmed his commitment to the original Wesleyan Methodist doctrines of secession

boiled Christianity down to abolitionism alone where Scott saw it as but one of the moral fruits of the Christian faith.

That spring, Scott conducted a tour of some of the yearly conferences. His first trip was to the Rochester Conference in Penn Yan, New York at the end of April 1846. Scott's health remained "very poor" during the trip, but he nevertheless participated in the proceedings of the conference and raised money for the Book Concern. When that conference unanimously nominated him to attend the World's Convention, he observed, "The idea of my poor state of health appeared to weigh more in the minds of the brethren than the Convention itself."[83] A few weeks later, he traveled to the Champlain Conference and arrived at Weybridge, Vermont on May 7. His condition only worsened, to the point where he could barely sit up and missed most of the conference. Yet, in the same manner that he repeatedly exhibited that was so deleterious to his health, he went on to preach as soon as he "felt a little better." Nevertheless, he made clear his general physical trajectory at the time: "I desire to 'cease at once to work and live.'"[84]

After these conferences, Scott returned to Newbury for the summer to try and recover, forcing some of his responsibilities with the Book Concern to fall on Luther Lee. This meant he missed the St. Lawrence Conference, with Schuyler Hoes going in his place.[85] Nevertheless, Scott's actions during that spring, specifically at the Rochester Conference, produced a renewed controversy with the supporters of Garrison inside and outside the Wesleyan Methodist

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and abolitionism. See O.S. "Christian Fellowship.," *True Wesleyan*, April 25, 1846, vol. 4, no. 17, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[83] O. Scott, "Rochester Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, May 9, 1846, vol. 4, no. 19, p. 3; S. Hoes, "Visit to the St. Lawrence Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, June 27, 1846, vol. 4, no. 26, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[84] O. Scott, "Champlain Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, May 23, 1846, vol. 4, no. 21, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott said his health was "a little better" by the time the conference adjourned on May 11. In a letter to Luther Lee, he explained that he continued to work despite his health because "I CANNOT REST till this plan [the 50 cents plan] is generally taken up."

[85] "Book Agent's Department.," *True Wesleyan*, June 6, 1846, vol. 4, no. 23, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Connection. While in Penn Yan for the Rochester Conference, Scott had proposed a series of resolutions on slavery: one sympathizing with Charles T. Torrey, who had been imprisoned for trying to aid fugitive slaves, and another urging Wesleyans to vote for antislavery candidates. But the greatest source of controversy came when Scott rose a second time later to propose another, third resolution. He stated:

> Resolved, That we will still maintain the high ground that we have taken on the subject of slavery and all other questions of moral reform, without relaxing in the least our moral and political action on those subjects, we nevertheless recommend to all our brethren to be wise and prudent in their manner of treating those subjects, as also in the selection of the most proper occasions for bringing them before the people; remembering that it is our great business to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.[86]

P.R. Sawyer, a New York Wesleyan, was shocked to hear Scott propose that resolution. "We persuade ourself, that it was not the robust and fearless O. Scott of '40, '43 fame, but it was the care worn emaciated O. Scott of 1846," he later wrote in the *True Wesleyan*.[87]

This comment soon spiraled into a larger debate. J.W. Walker penned his own article for the *True Wesleyan* concurring with Sawyer.[88] This inevitably led Scott to issue a response of his own a few weeks later. Although partly a recapitulation of events from the Rochester Conference, Scott's article is nevertheless noteworthy because it represented a continuation of his debate with radical abolitionism. During that debate, Scott had worried that Garrison had made non-resistance and women's rights official positions of antislavery orthodoxy. When one of his own resolutions failed at the Rochester Conference, Scott contrasted his attitude with that of Sawyer's. "I have never thought of casting off brethren and representing them as fallen, and indirectly at least advising them to leave us, because they cannot go as fast as I do," he wrote,

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[86] Orange Scott, quoted in P.R. Sawyer, "Rochester Conference.," *True Wesleyan*, June 6, 1846, vol. 4, no. 23, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[87] Sawyer, "Rochester Conference.," 2.
[88] W., "Rochester Conference – Anti-Slavery.," *True Wesleyan*, June 23, 1846, vol. 4, no. 26, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Walker believed they should oppose slavery "'in season and out of season.'"

touting his antislavery *bona fides* and declaring that he had taken his antislavery views "to the very *verge of ultraism*." For Scott, there was nothing wrong or compromising about wisdom and prudence, arguing that those terms had been "*perverted*" from their original "*Christian sense.*" In Scott's view, everything had its "times, and seasons, and subjects." Prudence was the guide to help Christians discern questions of *when* and *how*. Scott pressed further, arguing that Christianity was ultimately a religion about Jesus Christ. That always took precedence over reform. This, however, did not mean an abandonment of "morals" and "laws."[89] Scott's Wesleyanism was at once abolitionist and evangelical; but it saw antislavery agitation as a tangible and requisite manifestation of religious faith rather than a principal function of the institutional church.

Sawyer's reply proved equally as biting as Scott's and, in some respects, amounted to an attack on Scott's leadership. Juxtaposing his own perspective with those who "will incline to go for brother Scott, 'right or wrong,'" Sawyer lamented that "conservatism" had prevailed over "radicalism" at the Rochester Conference. Sawyer, it should be noted, based his defense on the premise that he had given everything to "the altar of anti-slavery" and would not "rest quietly" as Scott criticized him.[90] Sawyer, then, made Scott's point for him: that he had come to regard abolitionism, in one way or another, as the central and defining mission of their church.

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[89] O. Scott, "Rochester Conference – Anti-Slavery.," *True Wesleyan*, June 23, 1846, vol. 4, no. 26, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott took aim at Sawyer's comment about his health, sarcastically saying, "Thank you brother Sawyer, that you are willing to allow me the benefits of second childhood with which to cover my foibles. Mental weakness sometimes come on apace. I was the old-fashioned veritable O. Scott on Friday evening, in drafting certain resolutions and in speaking to them; ...." He then criticized Sawyer's disregard for those who came before him. "I am glad there are young men coming up among us so much superior to their fathers and leaders. But I do beg, that after having by anti-slavery efforts laid the foundation for a premature grave, I may not be accused by my junior brethren of betraying a cause more precious to me than life itself, without better evidence than exhorting brethren to be 'wise and prudent' in maintaining the 'high ground' they have taken, by 'moral and political action!'"
[90] P.R. Sawyer, "Rochester Conference – O. Scott.," *True Wesleyan*, July 18, 1846, vol. 4, no. 29, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

Tensions over the Scott-Sawyer controversy continued to spiral during the summer of 1846. This forced Lee to put out an announcement in the *True Wesleyan* encouraging "orderly" discussion and urging correspondents to "keep cool, and exclude personalities, ..."[91] For his part, Scott hoped to quickly conclude the debate and, on July 23, wrote what he expected would be his final article on the subject. Most notably, he grappled with Sawyer's juxtaposition between conservatism and radicalism. Rather than see conservatism as a pejorative, Scott replied, "I saw nothing of 'conservatism' in the Rochester Conference that I would not be glad to see in every Wesleyan Conference." He continued: "Those who laugh at the idea of wisdom and prudence, and ridicule the notion of conservatism, are not the men for me – and they never were. I am as conservative now as I was in '40, or '43, and no more so."[92] But Scott also crystallized the growing gulf between the two camps of Wesleyans. "If brother Sawyer wishes to preach nothing but abolitionism, and the people are satisfied to take all their meals from that dish, I have no objection," he said but added that "I find it important to preach on other subjects, sometimes."[93]

During this exposition, Scott also clarified his understanding of the principle-policy paradigm that had shaped much of his thinking about unity and cooperation. The debate at Penn Yan had not been one between "human expediency" and "divine claims," but "a question among brethren of the same faith – the same principles." He then made this dichotomy explicit. "It was a question relating not so much to principle, as the best method of carrying out principle," he

[91] "To Correspondents.," *True Wesleyan*, July 18, 1846, vol. 4, no. 29, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[92] O. Scott, "Rochester Conference – P.R. Sawyer.," *True Wesleyan*, August 1, 1846, vol. 4, no. 31, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Scott later said, "There is a sense in which the terms wisdom, prudence, conservatism, &c. are a stench in the nostrils of a man of stern integrity; but there is a sense also in which they are a sweet savor, as the Bible every where shows." In the *True Wesleyan* from July 25, 1846, Scott said that he hoped this article would "end the controversy respecting the Rochester Conference." See O.S., "P.R. Sawyer.," True Wesleyan, July 25, 1846, vol. 4, no. 30, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[93] Scott, "Rochester Conference – P.R. Sawyer.," 3. Scott also offered insight into his preaching after becoming an abolitionists, saying he liked "to 'spice my sermons' occasionally with abolitionism,..."

wrote to Sawyer, adding that "There always has been, there always will be a difference of opinion in relation to measures."[94]

Scott's health, however, only grew worse. That summer, he withdrew his name from consideration for the World's Convention due to his "extreme personal debility"; he could not "sit up half the time – some days scarcely any."[95] He spent much of that year trying to recuperate from these ailments, yet continued to operate the Book Concern, dividing his time between the New York offices and his home in Newbury. By the fall he made the decision to move closer to the Wesleyan offices and relocated his family to Newark, New Jersey on September 1. Scott's new home was a large, two-floor house with "spacious out-buildings," "A Valuable well of water", young fruit trees, and 823 acres of land. The estate, fortuitously situated near the railroad between New York and Philadelphia, made Scott's nine-mile commute to the Wesleyan offices significantly easier.[96] He further hoped the land would be "a fine place" for his eldest son, Charles, to work.[97]

Undeterred by his own debilitations, he continued to engage in issues that came before the Wesleyan Connection. During preliminary – and eventually unsuccessful – negotiations to

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[94] Scott, "Rochester Conference – P.R. Sawyer.," 3. At the end of this article, Scott added some insight into his relationship with Sawyer, whom he said he had mentored when they were in the Methodist Episcopal Church and "loved and cherished him as a son." He even likened Sawyer to himself when he first became an abolitionist: "young – ardent – and perhaps obstinate." Sawyer's curt response was published 4 weeks later, describing Scott's article as "calculated to provoke a tart reply." He complained that his gratitude for Scott's mentorship did not "deprive me of the right to oppose his acts...." Unlike Scott, Sawyer said he grew more radical as he got older. See P.R. Sawyer, "Rochester Conf. – O. Scott.," *True Wesleyan*, August 29, 1846, vol. 1, no. 35, p. 1-2.

[95] O. Scott, "London Christian Alliance.," *True Wesleyan*, July 25, 1846, vol. 4, no. 30, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Even if he was well, he said he could not go while proslavery Methodists were present. He then proposed the moneys raised for his voyage be redirected to the Book Concern.

[96] "Notice.," *True Wesleyan*, September 5, 1846, vol. 1, no. 36, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Orange Scott, "Valuable Real Estate for Sale.," *True Wesleyan*, July 24, 1847, vol. 5, no. 30, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). This notice, put out on the eve of Scott's death, advertises his property. From this one can extrapolate the property he acquired during his final year.

[97] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 270.

unite the Wesleyan Methodists and the United Brethren, Scott endorsed a potential union.[98] In October, he spotlighted Wesleyan missions and urged members to fund the Canadian mission, which was being overseen by Cyrus Prindle and John N. Mars.[99] That November, he attended the annual gathering of the Parent Missionary Society and, as the society's treasurer, read the report at their meeting.[100] On November 28, he took his family to a concert at Washington Hall in Newark that was hosted by Hutchinson family, a group of vocalists who hosted concerts across the mid-Atlantic. While Scott found their performances impressive, he especially enjoyed the "moral character" of their "anti-slavery, anti-war, and temperance" content and gave the concert a favorable review: it "cannot be listened to without profit."[101]

In December, however, the Wesleyan Methodists suffered a major setback: the Dracut Seminary, the school Scott had helped establish a few years earlier, shuttered, leading Scott to urge the church to "turn all our energies to putting our Book Concern on a permanent foundation, ..."[102] At this same time, Scott also devised an essay-writing contest for the connection.[103] Then, at the end of the year, he issued one of his last appeals for the Book Concern: they needed $10,000 by the end of January. This personal and desperate appeal, unlike all his previous

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[98] O. Scott, "United Brethren and the Wesleyans.," *True Wesleyan*, August 29, 1846, vol. 1, no. 35, p. 1-2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). George Pegler disagreed with this and wrote an article in the *True Wesleyan* on September 19. Scott replied to Pegler a week later to clarify that he did not want the Wesleyans to modify their theology in the name of unity.

[99] See O. Scott, "The Canada Mission.," and J.N. Mars, "Canada Mission.," *True Wesleyan*, October 10, 1846, vol. 4, no. 41, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[100] "The Missionary Anniversary.," *True Wesleyan*, November 16, 1846, vol. 4, no. 46, p. 2-3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[101] O. Scott, "The Hutchinson Family.," *True Wesleyan*, December 5, 1846, vol. 4, no. 49, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). He said one of their antislavery songs was equal to an entire antislavery lecture. While Scott admitted that music did not always have a "good effect," he said that "they sing nothing having the least licentious tendency" and called it "innocent amusement." He ended his account of the concert by promoting an upcoming one on December 2 in Newark and urging readers to attend if they could.

[102] O. Scott, "Discontinuance of Dracutt Seminary.," *True Wesleyan*, December 12, 1846, vol. 4, no. 50, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

[103] Agent, "Prize Essays for the Pulpit.," *True Wesleyan*, December 12, 1846, vol. 4, no. 50, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

requests and lobbies, was met with a considerable outpouring of sympathy.[104] One anonymous donor from Ontario County, New York, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, exemplified an emerging trend by enclosing five dollars for the *True Wesleyan* and the Book Concern. "Go on brother in the work you have begun," he told Scott, "and may God prosper you in your labors of love."[105] Small donations flowed in the opening weeks months of 1847, but began to slow by the middle of February. Scott, nevertheless, encouraged Wesleyans to keep donating. "Strain every nerve – and ALL DO THIS, and do this NOW, and we will weather the storm," he implored, warning Wesleyans that March was the "hardest [month] of the whole year" for their finances.[106]

Although he did not make public the extent of his medical problems, his status in November and December 1846 was dire. During this time, he kept Lucius Matlack appraised on his health. By December, he was largely bedridden and discouraged. He suffered from a fever, night sweats, a cough, pain in the side, a lack of appetite, and a pulse of 120 beats per minute. Nevertheless, he went New York to continue working as soon as his heart rate dropped to 85 beats per minute, but, even then, he told Matlack, "I can scarcely hold my head up." In January 1847, Scott visited his physician, who gave him an ultimatum: "go on as I am going and *die*; or take a proper course, and live." [107]

In February, J.W. Walker sent shockwaves through the entire connection by withdrawing. In his withdrawal statement, he directly invoked a Garrisonian perspective and argued that he

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[104] "A Happy New Year.," *True Wesleyan*, December 19, 1846, vol. 4, no. 51, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021)
[105] "Donation from Episcopal Methodists.," *True Wesleyan*, January 30, 1847, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[106] "Our Receipts.," *True Wesleyan*, February 20, 1847, vol. 5, no. 8, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[107] Orange Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 272-273. Scott's doctor specifically ordered him to stop writing and engaging in other "mental exercises."

could no longer support the Wesleyans because he saw the U.S. Constitution as a "covenant with death."[108] Walker, like Garrison, lambasted the Wesleyans because he considered them too loyal to the Liberty Party.[109] Although the split proved mostly amicable, Lee criticized Walker's radicalism and challenged him to engage in a discussion over U.S. Constitution. Hoping to encourage a debate, Lee opened the columns of the *True Wesleyan* to Walker. Lee partly made this decision to contrast the more tolerate Wesleyans with their former church. Walker, however, refused Lee's offer. Undeterred, Lee pressed Walker to give him a substitute. Walker obliged and cited a person "representative of his views" against the U.S. Constitution: Orange Scott.[110]

On March 22, 1847, Scott penned what would be his final editorial. He found Walker's decision perplexing. "Bro. Walker certainly does not understand me," he wrote, clarifying that he believed some of Walker's views were "*bad, very bad*." While he admitted that he had struggled over elements of the U.S. Constitution, namely his belief that it tolerated slavery to some extent, he nevertheless arrived at the point that "many of its features is as clear and strong an anti-slavery instrument as it would be possible to frame." For Scott, his problems with the Constitution were not with the document itself but with how it had been interpreted and implemented. It was "the pro-slavery spirit of the courts and of the country that the *construction* put upon the Constitution has given it a decided pro-slavery character." He also defended the Liberty Party. In this respect, Scott stressed a conservatism that argued that the solution to a

[108] "Rev. J.W. Walker Withdrawn.," *True Wesleyan*, February 6, 1847, vol. 5, no. 6, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[109] "Cleveland Church.," *True Wesleyan*, February 27, 1847, vol. 5, no. 9, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[110] "Rev. J.W. Walker Withdrawn.," *True Wesleyan*, February 6, 1847, vol. 5, no. 6, p. 2. "Rev. J.W. Walker.," *True Wesleyan*, March 20, 1847, vol. 5, no. 12, p. 2. J.W. Walker, "To Luther Lee.," *True Wesleyan*, March 27, 1847, vol. 5, no. 13, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Walker said, "my views of the Constitution, &c., are the same as ORANGE SCOTT's if I understand them. I am willing that if his health will allow, that he write in my stead."

corrupted Constitution in the present was the “regeneration of the Constitution itself.”[111] As seen with the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, this did necessarily require conserving the institution as it existed. It could mean, as seen by Scott’s own musings on disunion, the rebirth of new, purer institution better attuned with first principles.

Scott ended his reply to Walker by juxtaposing his conservatism with the more radical tendencies of the era. The work of reform was to be of a “slow pace” and men like Walker were more radical than they should be. Nevertheless, he offered to leave them alone and let them:

> try the strength of their wings in soaring above all that is justly and properly called reform! Let them multiply their ultraisms, *ad infintium*, and hang the whole subject of Christian fellowship on a single item of their new notions, and see where they will land![112]

Scott, for his part, said he was “satisfied” with the “great reformatory principles on which we organized at Utica” which he saw as being limited to abolition, peace, and temperance.[113] This again echoes his arguments with Garrison and his belief that the Garrisonians had unmoored their reforms from religious conviction and first principles. In the case of Garrison, abolitionism and peace had evolved into non-resistance. Walker had followed a similar trajectory and arrived at the same positions as Garrison on human government. Even as he neared the end of his life, Scott maintained his conservative and radical approach to reform by stressing his uncompromising allegiance to principle balanced by prudential considerations.

At the end of May, Scott’s afflictions grew worse, and, because of pulmonary consumption, he resigned his agency at the Book Concern. Cyrus Prindle was promptly named his successor. In an official statement, Lee told readers that the move would have come sooner if

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[111] O. Scott, “The United States Constitution – Position of the Agent Defined.,” *True Wesleyan*, March 27, 1847, vol. 5, no. 13, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[112] Scott, “The United States Constitution – Position of the Agent Defined.,” 3.
[113] Scott, “The United States Constitution – Position of the Agent Defined.,” 3.

not for hope that Scott would recover. "O. Scott is now, and has been for some time past, but little more than a shadow of his former self, the prostrated ruins of what was once a noble edifice of moral and intellectual grandeur," he said. Although his mind had largely retained its faculties, Scott had begun to suffer from "physical prostration and comparative helplessness." He retired to his home in Newark, New Jersey, never to leave again, languishing for several months until he delivered a final farewell to the Wesleyan Methodist Connection by dictation to Prindle on July 8. In those final words, he once again turned to the Book Concern. "The embarrassed state of our Book Concern," he wrote, "has literally worn me out." Nevertheless, his farewell struck an optimistic tone for that enterprise and for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection more broadly. He endorsed Prindle as his successor to the Book Concern and reaffirmed his belief in the fifty-cent plan and the stock plan.[114]

Scott's farewell, however, ultimately had a bittersweet tone. "I am not full of joy, but I have a strong confidence in God," he said as he neared the end. But he nevertheless ended by reaffirming those causes to which he had devoted his entire life. "My views of the Christian Religion remain unchanged," he declared, "The same is true with regard to the Anti-Slavery and Wesleyan movements." In his "dying testimony," then, he reaffirmed his commitment to "the cause" and clearly defined what "the cause" had always been: "the abolition of Slavery and Church reform."[115] Whether deliberate on Scott's part or not, this assertion echoed the pledge that William Wilberforce had made at the commencement of his own moral crusade: the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.

[114] "Book Concern – Resignation – New Agent.," *True Wesleyan*, May 29, 1847, vol. 5, no. 22, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).
[115] "Book Concern – Resignation – New Agent.," 2.

Ephraim Scott spent much of the final months helping care for his older brother. On July 6, he wrote to Lucius Matlack that Orange Scott could die at any moment. “He wants to see you very much,” Ephraim Scott wrote, “fail not for one day. Come if you possibly can.”[116] Within a few days, Matlack set out for Newark with his wife, Maria, for one final farewell to the man who had mentored him over the past several years.

In his biography of Orange Scott, Lucius Matlack relayed his last visit. After being greeted and welcomed by Ephraim Scott and Eliza Dearborn Scott, Matlack went immediately to Orange Scott’s room. In part, Matlack described the scene: “there lay, stretched on a cot, all that was left of the sturdy frame, and vigorous constitution of Orange Scott. ... It was little but a skeleton. The fleshless hand, the sunken eye, the hollow cheek needed no change to make a perfect corpse.” Over the next few days, Scott and Matlack conversed for short periods of time about a host of topics from existential religious questions to the state of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. Matlack also recorded Scott’s autobiography in intervals. Others came to visit, including Cyrus Prindle, Schuyler Hoes, and Luther Lee, but Matlack and Ephraim Scott were the two constants. In one of his final conversations, which he had with both Matlack and Eliza Dearborn Scott, Orange Scott ruminated on how he would have approached the Book Concern differently. His plans, he told them, had carried beyond the mere publication of written material for the connection. He had hoped it could become a platform for greater charity and philanthropy. “If I had lived,” he began, “I should have gone into the work of impressing on the wealthy classes, their duty to the millions enduring poverty and toil.”[117]

Matlack ultimately stayed in Newark with Scott for almost two weeks. When he left, Ephraim Scott furnished him with daily updates on Orange Scott’s health. On the evening July

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[116] Ephraim Scott, quoted in Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 275.
[117] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 276, 283-284.

30, Schuyler Hoes visited Scott's estate on what he imaged would be an ordinary visit and session of prayer. Once he arrived, however, he quickly realized the gravity of the situation. Hoes returned the next evening at 8:30 pm to pray with Scott. After singing briefly for about an hour to Scott's "enjoy[ment]" – including the songs "God moves in a mysterious way" and "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand" – Orange Scott became unresponsive and, by 11:15 pm on July 31, 1847, he had died.[118]

The years 1840-1847 marked the culmination of his life's work. He had spent his life evangelizing to people and promoting reform on issues of slavery, temperance, and church government. His intractable convictions had set him on a collision course with two extremes: a pusillanimous Methodist Episcopal Church he saw as tolerating slavery and an extreme Garrisonian faction that he believed had taken its zeal for abolition too far. These controversies did not cease with the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection because Scott's secession had been a repudiation of them both. In seeking to build up his church, Scott charted a course that advanced the principles of pure Wesleyanism and pure Garrisonianism: it freed Methodism from the taint of slavery and racism, yet it did not abrogate the role of human governments or reject gender complementarianism. It was committed to radical measures in pursuit of a conservative and, eventually, restorative end. His denomination represented the last resort of the conservative who had come to the realization that he had become the radical; the institutions which he endeavored to conserve had been warped to the point where they were unrecognizable. The only way to conserve, then, was to restore. And this revitalization could only occur by creating new institutions that better adhered to the original purpose of the decayed institutions he had long sought to save.

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[118] Matlack, *The Memoir of Rev. Orange Scott*, 287-288.

Scott's denomination portrayed itself as moderate in the sense that it could temper the deficiencies of conservatism and radicalism. With the former, it turned conservatism from that "do-nothing" variety that Scott had condemned among the Methodist Episcopal ministry and restored it to its rightful place as a check on extremism through prudence, patience, and wisdom. Like an Edmund Burke, Scott's reformism was slow and cautious. Nevertheless, it was also unbending and uncompromising in pursuit of what he deemed to be absolute moral truth. At the same time, Scott reigned in the radical impulses among those within his own church by tethering their zeal for reform more rigidly to its source: Christianity. In Scott's view, this enabled the Wesleyans to focus on the reform movements of their age – slavery, temperance, and peace – while avoiding the Garrisonian trap that turned legitimate zeal into radical innovation.

Because Orange Scott died in 1847, he did not speak on many of the questions that came to shape the age in which he lived: the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act, the Kansas-Nebraska Act and Stephen Douglas' popular sovereignty scheme, the rise of the Republican Party, Dred Scot, Harper's Ferry, and even the division of the Union that he predicted in 1844. One can infer things, but Scott never had the opportunity to shape or influence these momentous events. Nevertheless, he left a profound mark on the antislavery movement in word and deed. His vision of reform helped lay the foundation for the ultimate extinction of slavery because he understood the evil of slavery could not be confined to churches, to society, or to political institutions. It required concerted action from a combination of all three. As one of the first Methodists in the antebellum United States to publicly embrace abolitionism and aggressively promote it, Scott paved the way for an antislavery realignment within the larger Methodist family. That realignment helped create the cultural, religious, intellectual, and political conditions that made the abolition of slavery a possibility and, eventually, a reality. Wesleyan

Methodism may have failed to overtake Episcopal Methodism as a denomination, but Orange Scott succeeded beyond his wildest imaginations in transforming the church that had created him.

CONCLUSION

Orange Scott received three funerals over the span of two weeks: a funeral service in New York City at Luther Lee's house on August 2, 1847, a burial at Springfield, Massachusetts on August 4, and a memorial service at Lowell, Massachusetts on August 10. Services for Scott's burial at Springfield on August 4 began between 10:00 and 10:30 am at the Methodist Episcopal chapel and became an occasion which brought men from differing denominations together. Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodists alike attended and participated in the funeral, and Congregational minister Samuel Osgood led them in prayer. Lucius Matlack then rose to deliver a sermon based on Daniel 12:3.[1] Carried to the grave with "a multitude" of mourners in tow, Scott was buried alongside his first wife and two children: Hopestill Bigelow Scott and Amey Fletcher Scott.[2] Methodists at Lowell, a community with which Scott had long had an affinity, organized a commemorative service of their own in the days that followed. Like Scott's Springfield funeral, this service brought a diverse collection of Wesleyans, Episcopal Methodists, and Baptists together to mourn.

Luther Lee and Lucius Matlack, who together delivered the funeral sermons, presented a similar portrait of Scott. For both men, Scott's greatness stemmed from the fact that he accomplished great things despite humble origins. For Lee, Scott was "a self-made man" who became "an extraordinary man" through hard work and "his own energy."[3] "Some had more

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[1] "Rev. Orange Scott is No More.," *True Wesleyan*, August 7, 1847, vol. 6, no. 32, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021); Lucius C. Matlack, "Rev. Orange Scott. Funeral Services at Springfield.," *True Wesleyan*, August 14, 1847, vol. 6, no. 33, p. 2, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021)

[2] Lucius C. Matlack, *Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Rev. Orange Scott, August 4, 1847* (Lowell, Massachusetts: Pillsbury & Knapp, Printers, 1847), 2.

[3] Luther Lee, *A Great Man Fallen. A Sermon Preached on the Occasion of the Death of the Rev. Orange Scott. By Luther Lee*, Internet Archive, Digitized by John Hopkins University (https://archive.org/details/greatmanfallense00leel/mode/2up) 2, 7.

scholastic polish, and some blew more silver toned instruments," Lee observed, "but his was the trump of God sounding the notes of uncompromising truth, ..."[4] Matlack likewise noted that Scott's greatness did not stem from wealth, birth, or education. Scott's life was a testament that wisdom was not "the offspring only of the academy or university" because Scott had received a wisdom "not of this world."[5] Scott was not a "self-made man," argued Matlack because he was "God-made and self-*taught*."[6] And for both men, Scott's life could be subdivided into that of the minister and the abolitionist. Yet they both saw these sides of his life as sharing a deep connection. Both men then turned to the question of legacy. For Matlack, this had an obvious answer: Scott had established a new religious sect. But he had also done so much more than that. He had secured "the organization of a religious body on anti-slavery principles, as a means of exerting upon the community a more powerful influence in favor of the oppressed, ..." For Matlack, Scott was successful in that endeavor. "Never was true wisdom more fully displayed than in the choice of this means to this end."[7]

By contrast, Lee offered a far more ambitious answer. After observing that "no one man ever produced more agitation in the bosom of the M.E. Church than Orange Scott," Lee declared:

> It is true he has not done all that has been done to agitate the church on the slave question, by which she has been rent asunder, between the North and South, but he has been the leading agent, the exciting instrumentality which stirred up other elements around him, that would otherwise have slumbered, so that we may venture to say, that if there had been no Orange Scott, there would have been no division of the M.E. Church on the subject of slavery.[8]

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[4] Lee, *A Great Man Fallen*, 7.
[5] Matlack, *Sermon*, 5-6.
[6] Matlack, *Sermon*, 7.
[7] Matlack, *Sermon*, 20.
[8] Lee, *A Great Man Fallen*, 8.

Lee, however, was not alone in making this claim. The *Olive Branch*, a Boston religious newspaper, concurred with his framing. Orange Scott, editor Thomas F. Norris wrote, correctly estimated the extent of latent antislavery sentiment within the church. By withdrawing, Norris continued, Scott had gained "a terrible lever power, which shook the Methodist Episcopal Church to its centre, and finally divided it longitudinally into two great antagonist parties, ..." Yet Norris portrayed this as an act of sacrifice on Scott's part. By withdrawing from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Scott had forced northern Methodists to take a firmer ground on slavery to stop the insurgent antislavery and biracial church.[9] This is one of the important elements of Scott's legacy that many of his contemporaries noticed. By withdrawing from the church in defeat and taking thousands with him, he created the impression of an ascendent antislavery church. Self-preservation, then, forced anti-abolitionists to change their tune to stem that rising tide. That northern Methodists targeted James Osgood Andrew only a year after the 1843 Utica Convention is circumstantial but nevertheless compelling evidence that Scott helped create the climate in which a wider split could take place.

Frederick Douglass shared this view. In a speech on slavery and the American churches that he delivered in Bristol in 1846, Douglass credited the Wesleyan Methodists with helping divide the Methodist Episcopal Church. These "'True Wesleyans,'" he observed, had "sounded the alarm in the northern states" on slavery and embraced the fundamental equality between white and Black Christians. The Wesleyan secession, in Douglass' view, created the climate that made the controversy over Andrew's slaveholding a flashpoint for American Methodism. "The

[9] "The Late Rev. Orange Scott.," *Olive Branch*, September 18, 1847, vol. 12, no. 11, p. 2, American Antiquarian Society (accessed January 11, 2023).

northern churches felt that if they did not do something to look like anti-slavery the whole of the members in the north would leave their communion," he declared.[10]

Scott's death led to an outpouring of sympathy from his allies. Lewis Tappan penned an essay on his life and his antislavery legacy, arguing that Scott was the template for Christian abolitionists. If they followed in his "footsteps," Tappan concluded, they could prove to their skeptics "that the term Abolitionist is synonymous with that of Philanthropist, Patriot, and Christian."[11] A report for the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society marked 1847 as a year of "heavy losses," noting that three great abolitionists had died: Amos A. Phelps, Orange Scott, and John Quincy Adams.[12] The *True Wesleyan* became a space for grieving Wesleyans to share their thoughts on his death, with some even furnishing poetry.[13]

Even some of Scott's detractors reacted with sadness. Thomas Whittemore, editor of *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, published a short editorial on his death. Describing Scott as "a talented clergyman of the Methodist denomination," Whittemore reflected briefly on his controversy with the "gentleman" over universal salvation. It had been "conducted with great spirit on both sides, but with good feeling," he admitted before informing readers that he did not harbor "an unfriendly feeling toward Br. Scott." After surmising that Scott's spirit had returned to God, he ended his comments with a simple prayer: "May God sanctify the event to his family,

[10] Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, vol. 1: 1841-1846, edited by John W. Blassingame, C. Peter Ripley, Lawrence N. Powell, Fiona E. Spiers, and Clarence L. Mohr (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 386-388.
[11] L.T., "The Late Rev. Orange Scott.," *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, October 1, 1847, vol. 2, no. 22, p. 6, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 14, 2022).
[12] "Foreign Operations. The United States.," *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, vol. 3, no. 30, p. 93-94, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 10, 2022).
[13] For poetry, see A. Lummus, "Rev. Orange Scott.," *True Wesleyan*, August 21, 1847, vol. 6, no. 34, p. 3, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021) and J.M.S., "On the Death of Orange Scott.," *True Wesleyan*, August 28, 1847, vol. 6, no. 35, p. 1, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021). Both poems touted Scott's abolitionism, with Lummus writing "Afric's sons have lost a father, / All th' oppressed have lost a friend;" and J.M.S. writing that "Honored will be his name,/ Lasting will be his fame,/ 'Mongst all, of high or humble lot:/ The churches saved from wrong -/ The Bondman with free tongue, / Will bless the name of Orange Scott."

the church to which he was a member, and the Christian church at large." Similarly, when faced with the prospect of Scott's imminent death, Abel Stevens, the anti-abolition editor of the *Zion's Herald*, lamented the news. Although Stevens believed Scott to be "mistaken and mischievous" in the "course" he had taken, he nevertheless wrote: "The Lord bless our old opponent, and may we meet him in that world where our petty strifes shall cease, and good men shall all see 'eye to eye.'" While Stevens' lamentation downplayed slavery as a minor issue and therefore largely missed the point as to why they differed on it, his words were still deeply affecting to Wesleyans. Lucius Matlack saw it as proof that Scott had "out-lived his foes" because he had made them once again his "friends."[14]

Yet not all of Scott's enemies could let bygones be bygones. The Garrisonians particularly diminished and downplayed Scott's legacy in the wake of his death. When the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society chose to adopt a resolution lamenting the losses of Scott and Phelps, the parent society condemned them. Their resolution, however, had been a simple act of mourning the loss of "Two able and efficient advocates of the cause." Yet Garrison, recalling the "evil purpose" of the cabal of "Orthodox clergy," endorsed a national rebuke of the state society and said if they wished to grieve for Scott and Phelps, then they needed to adopt a resolution which "conformed to the facts of the case." Specifically, Garrison hypothesized what this resolution could look like. After giving the two men early credit for their antislavery labors, he insisted on placing an emphasis on how they "lifted their heels against their old associates, and endeavored to commit the anti-slavery cause to the hands of clerical aspirants and sectarian

[14] "Death of Rev. O. Scott.," *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, August 14, 1847, vol. 20, no. 9, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 17, 2023); "The Rev. O. Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, July 21, 1847, vol. 18, no. 29, p. 2, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed January 11, 2023); Matlack, *Sermon*, 21.

compromisers."[15] Yet the criticisms of the Garrisonians ultimately paled in contrast with those who mourned Scott's death.

Rather than being a footnote in either the history of Methodism or abolitionism, Orange Scott was a central figure in both. He spent more than half his life in the ministry, and a dozen of those years as a professed and uncompromising abolitionist. During that time, he converted hundreds to evangelical Christianity and abolitionism inside and outside the Methodist Episcopal Church. Yet his greatest legacy was uniting these two forces together and formulating a cohesive worldview under the banner of abolition Methodism and, eventually, Wesleyan Methodism. This intellectual framework was at once conservative and radical, theologically orthodox yet politically reform minded. Scott developed and refined this framework through the three major debates that shaped and characterized his life: his clash with Thomas Whittemore over Universalism, his debate within the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery, and his argument with the Garrisonians over non-resistance. What unified these three debates, however, was a simple question: what was the role of Christianity in society?

For Scott, the answer was at once obvious and complicated. He saw Christianity as a traditional religion, but one which needed to be lived. Adherents were commanded to bear witness to the precepts and doctrines of the faith, but that commission also necessitated bold testimony against moral evil. Rather than cultivate complacency by assuring Americans that God was an amorphous, nebulous force of love, as Whittemore had argued, Scott believed in calling on people to repent of their sins and seek redemption in God. He applied this same mindset when he increasingly made social reform a part of his evangelization. He preached for sinners to repent of their sins – personal and national – with a great sense of urgency. In that sense, the zeal with

[15] "The Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society.," *Liberator*, January 21, 1848, vol. 18, no. 3, p. 3, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 14, 2022).

which he opposed Universalism was the same as when he challenged his own church's indifference on slavery. In both debates, Scott had championed a crucial place for the church in securing reform and promoting a more just society. When faced with a Garrisonian non-resistance that discarded church and state, Scott rebuked it because it made his vision of a reform that flowed from pulpit to people to politics impossible. Christianity was not only a crucial element in American society; it was the cornerstone of all beneficent activity.

This brand of abolition Methodism is important because it was a unique blend of Wesleyan Christianity and Garrisonian abolitionism. Scott promulgated this vision thanks in large part to the Methodist and antislavery presses. They became a platform for him to shock sensibilities, organize action, and, most importantly, vindicate his belief that modern abolitionism *was* primitive abolitionism. At the same time, he lent his skills as a popular preacher and presiding elder to help turn this worldview into a movement. Other figures in the church over the years were abolitionists, but Orange Scott became the face and voice of this movement in a way no one else had. He had a unique blend of uncompromising conviction, popular appeal, organizational acumen, and a vision that made him the right person to lead the abolition Methodists on their campaign against anti-abolitionism inside their church. And when he departed the church, Scott and his Wesleyans left behind some of the seeds of Methodism's demise in the years that followed. By making the issue of slavery a paramount consideration for the national church from 1835 through 1842, he forced the Methodist Episcopal Church to confront its abandonment of the ground that John Wesley and Francis Asbury had once occupied. In his early debates with Daniel Whedon and Wilbur Fisk, Scott had argued that change could only come by presenting people with a clear moral contrast. That stark juxtaposition ultimately forced apathetic northern Methodists to grapple with their own inaction.

Even though he faced many defeats within the Methodist Episcopal Church, Orange Scott nevertheless cultivated a crucial dynamic that contributed to the fall of the anti-abolition consensus in 1844. At the Cincinnati and Baltimore General Conferences in 1836 and 1840, abolition Methodism had been defeated thanks to a coalition of anti-abolition and proslavery Methodists. Yet the Fisk's, the Whedons's, the Nathan Bangs's, and the Abel Stevens's did not share the sentiment or worldview of the William Capers's and the William A. Smith's. During this time, abolition Methodism became the common enemy and arguably the only unifying thread between those two factions. By withdrawing from the church, Scott removed a central source of unity between them. Without the looming threat of abolitionism to keep them together, the issues which had proven to be deeply divisive – Black testimony and the right of ministers to own slaves – helped tear the church asunder only a few short years later. That could occur only if slavery was first introduced as a subject of consideration, and Orange Scott made it a major issue for the national church from 1835 through 1842.

Orange Scott left behind a Wesleyan Methodist Connection that numbered some 17,000 members and 500 preachers across the United States.[16] He was survived by six children and his wife. One daughter, Caroline Scott, died shortly after her father in 1847, with Lucius Matlack lamenting the loss of one "just verging into womanhood...."[17] Charles W. Scott, Orange Scott's first child, struggled after his father's death. According to one paper, he was "the crowning shame of the family." Three of Scott's daughters, Laura, Amie Eliza, and Anna Wesley lived to adulthood, although none of them had children of their own. Orange W. Scott, Orange Scott's

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[16] "To the Ministers and Members of the Several Branches of the Methodist Family in Great Britain and Ireland.," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 9, 1848, vol. 8, no. 41, p. 2, Gale, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive (accessed April 14, 2022).
[17] Matlack, "Caroline Scott – A Fragment.," *True Wesleyan*, January 1, 1848, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 4, Wesleyan Church (accessed February 10, 2021).

youngest child born in 1842, went on to have the most distinguished legacy of all the Scott children. Unlike his mother, who remained a Wesleyan until she died, Orange W. Scott joined his sisters Amie Eliza and Anna Wesley in returning to the Methodist Episcopal Church and went on to become a minister. But he did not simply pursue the same vocation as his father; he was a man keenly aware of his father's legacy and brought it with him into the church. When reporting on one such sermon, the *Boston Daily Globe* observed that he had "caused considerable of a stir in certain circles."[18] Orange W. Scott also championed his father's zeal for temperance and admired his commitment to abolitionism.

The latter of these intersected neatly with a larger retrospective on Orange Scott within the Methodist Episcopal Church that took place in the years after the Civil War. Part of this stemmed from the fact that many Wesleyans – Jotham Horton, Lucius Matlack, Ephraim Scott, and others – returned to the Methodist Episcopal fold as the church took a firmer position against slavery. This retrospective first began with anecdotes of those who knew Scott and were affected by him. Episcopal Methodists increasingly softened their earlier frustrations with his perceived radicalism. The *Zion's Herald* even published a hagiographic article on Scott that was written by Luther Lee in 1874.[19] While Episcopal Methodists did not endorse his conduct after 1842, they adopted a conciliatory perspective. In this recounting of events, slavery had driven a good man

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[18] "Untitled.," *Rutland County Herald*, December 8, 1854, vol. 60, no. 49, p. 2, NewspaperArchive (accessed February 8, 2021). "Local News. Newbury.," *Bradford National Opinion*, November 16, 1866, vol. 1, no. 23, p. 1, NewspaperArchive (accessed February 8, 2021). "Our Army Correspondence. From the Gulf Department.," *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, March 25, 1864, vol. 59, no. 21, p. 1, NewspaperArchive (accessed February 8, 2021). "Rev. O.W. Scott of Brockton Indignant.," *Boston Daily Globe*, August 15, 1898, vol. 54, no. 46, p. 7, Newspaper Archive (accessed February 8, 2021). According to the Vermont press, Charles W. Scott was "a deceiver and a swindler." The *Bradford National Opinion*, in an article on Charles W. Scott, harshly criticized him because Orange Scott had been "one of the first men of his time, a man of rare gifts, and a most earnest Christian."

[19] Luther Lee, "Rev. Orange Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, January 15, 1874, vol. 51, no. 3, p. 3, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 17, 2023). Lee contributed to a conciliatory tone by emphasizing slavery rather than church government in Scott's secession, arguing that Scott left the Methodist Episcopal Church to create an antislavery church similar to the Methodist Episcopal Church of 1874. His article presented to Methodists a portrait of a "good and great man" and advocate for "the universal rights of humanity."

from the church. Although this narrative did not condone Scott's secession, it became a part of the way postwar Methodists viewed the antebellum era. It accepted the Scottite premise that the church had lost its way in the 1830s and needed the disruptions of a Scott to bring it back to its original ground.

F.H. Newhall, delivering an address for the *Zion's Herald* at its semi-centennial, encapsulated this perspective. This involved admitting that the church had erred during the antebellum years, admitting that men like Wilbur Fisk and Elijah Hedding had committed "grave errors" by being "fearful that if the whole truth were spoken, frankly and fearlessly, it would explode the ecclesiastical machinery." Men like Fisk and Hedding "wasted their energies in striving to throttle the volcano" and ultimately left men like Scott to die "broken-hearted." "Had brave men, like Scott, been braver, and wise men, like Fisk and Hedding, been wiser," Newhall mused, "the Church might have saved the State, and the stain of American Slavery would not have been wiped out in blood." Newhall's speech, then, put a large share of the blame for Scott's secession on the church hierarchy for its unwillingness to listen to him. Scott, in essence, became a prophet of abolition who had gone unheeded in his lifetime. This did not mean he was completely blameless. Ultimately, Newhall arrived at a middle ground. "Orange Scott stood in 1840 just where every Methodist stood in 1860," he declared, but admitted that Scott could have still "waited ten years...." Yet even with this rather gentle criticism, Newhall put the onus on his own church. While Scott could have exercised more patience, the inverse was also true: the Church could have met him where he stood. Nevertheless, Newhall mused that "perhaps the Church needed the stern lessons of these secessions [the Methodist Protestants and the Wesleyan Methodists] in order to open her eyes." He then finished his discussion by observing that Scott

was among the "martyrs to the cause of the truth" and one of the "sacrifices on the altar of the Church." "Let us ... remember them with tenderness and charity," he concluded.[20]

Almost twenty years later, on May 11, 1892, Orange W. Scott published a short biography of his father as part of the larger Episcopal Methodist retrospective on Orange Scott's life. This essay, which spanned nearly three columns in the *Zion's Herald*, reflected on Orange Scott the preacher, the presiding elder, and the reformer. Orange W. Scott saw his father as a natural preacher, a model presiding elder, and a courageous reformer. Like Newhall, Scott cast his father as a prophet of abolition whom the church had failed to heed.[21]

In many respects, Orange W. Scott's framing had a great deal of truth behind it. Orange Scott's legacy can be summarized as simply holding up a mirror to his church and his country: showing people and institutions what they had become and then pointing them back to what they had once been. His ideas were only revolutionary in the sense that they challenged an existing status quo in church, state, and society that had lost its way. He opposed the religious modernism of a Whittemore by championing the timeless theology of orthodox Christianity; he castigated a Methodist Episcopal Church and its inaction on slavery by promulgating the teachings of John Wesley and Francis Asbury; and he resisted Garrisonian non-resistance by supporting church and state as they should be. First as a conservative and then as a restorer, Scott always saw the solution to existing problems as being found in the past and first principles. He had the appearance of a radical because he aggressively resisted what he saw as a corrupted present, but he was always devoted himself to the protection and restoration of ancient principles and institutions.

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[20] "Address of Dr. F.H. Newhall.," *Zion's Herald*, January 23, 1873, vol. 50, no. 4, p. 26, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).
[21] O.W. Scott, "Rev. Orange Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, May 11, 1892, vol. 70, no. 19, p. 146, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).

Orange Scott's temperament and message had won him few friends during his lifetime. His most obvious historical contribution had been leading a small band of religious outcasts from a church that saw them as disorganizers, schismatics, and radicals. Yet Scott did far more than simply withdraw from an anti-abolition church and establish a small evangelical denomination. In his quest to rebuild Methodism anew through Wesleyanism, Scott contributed to accomplishing his ends even if it did not happen the way he had intended. His legacy was to help restore the spirit of Wesley inside the Methodist Episcopal Church, an accomplishment most clearly demonstrated in the years and decades after he died. In the end, he won the debate over slavery. Although anecdotal, Orange W. Scott reflected this change at the end of his retrospective on his father. In the final paragraph, he recounted a recurring experience since joining the ministry in 1867. Many Methodists of different backgrounds from his fathers' generation, he wrote, had told him a simple phrase: "Your father was right!"[22] This postbellum admission, wherever and whenever it happened, symbolized that Orange Scott, for all his struggles and failings in life, had forever changed the course of American Methodism by turning it away from anti-abolition respectability and returning it back to its original antislavery convictions.

[22] O.W. Scott, "Rev. Orange Scott.," *Zion's Herald*, May 11, 1892, vol. 70, no. 19, p. 146, ProQuest, American Periodicals (accessed February 14, 2021).

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