"ENGLAND AND AMERICA FOR THE WORLD":

CONCERT AND CONTENTION IN THE ATLANTIC ENTERPRISE, 1836–1846

Despite the chilling effect of slavery controversy on transatlantic harmony in 1835–1836, the following decade witnessed increased frequency of religious intercommunication and familiarity between British Nonconformists and prominent American evangelicals. To some extent these intensified exchanges were made possible by technological improvements. By the 1840s steamship travel was more regular, swift, and commonplace, and in comparison with earlier crossings it had also become reasonably comfortable and safe. By the mid-1840s ocean crossings between Boston or New York and Liverpool (sometimes with a call at Halifax) could often be made in two weeks at a cost of slightly more than $100. Consequently, the steady flow of British visitors to America continued and seldom failed to produce comment, both friendly and hostile, on the experimental character of American religion, while even more numerous American Protestant travellers made their religious pilgrimages to Britain. The frequency and swiftness of the passage also whetted the appetite for transatlantic news. Newspapers and periodicals, many of them denominational or evangelical organs, flourished in both Britain and America in the 1830s and 1840s and were now able routinely to print detailed accounts of developments in politics, literature, and religion across the sea.

This strengthened Atlantic community was reflected in Dissenters' ties to their American brethren. In the two communities a substantial unity of outlook prevailed, encouraging parallel beliefs in invincible religious and moral progress in their own generation. To a large extent this ideological similitude rested on four common components. First, the easy exchange of ideas ministered to the creation of a great body of shared theological and pietistic literature. Religious authors frequently enjoyed international reputations. Second, many Dissenters and American church leaders alike promoted the exciting postmillennial faith with its promise of ultimate religious and moral triumph. To their minds the nineteenth century was rapidly moving toward a splendidly renewed Christian world, a progress evident in the visibly meliorating societies in England and America. Third, theological trends in the Reformed traditions of both countries
placed new emphases on human initiative, individual responsibility, and dedicated activism.

Several versions of "moderate Calvinism" won support on either side of the ocean. And fourth, both communities relied on their voluntary societies--usually very similar and often linked--to achieve victories for religion and reform.

Use of a popular transatlantic evangelical literature probably reached its apogee in this decade. Sometimes works of British Nonconformists were republished in the United States by regular reprinting of their contributions to the Religious Tract Society, the Sunday School Society, or similar institutions. Indeed, until 1833 the American Sunday School Society was chiefly dependent on English works, sometimes modified for American readers. But often individual titles of the best known Dissenters were also routinely reissued in America. Consequently, writings of such celebrities as David Bogue, John Edgar, Andrew Reed, Adam Clarke, John Pye Smith, Ralph Wardlaw, Frederick Augustus Cox, John Howard Hinton, and many others were well known to American Protestants. Even when there was no American reprinting, important Nonconformist works were still discussed, praised, and criticized in American journals and reviews.

In this area no one surpassed John Angell James in popularity. Even before the 1820s James' works began circulating in America. His titles were seldom doctrinal or controversial; they were eminently practical: The Sunday School Teacher's Guide (1818), The Family Monitor; or a Help to Domestic Happiness (1823), The Christian Father's Present to His Children (1825), Christian Fellowship (1829), Christian Charity Explained (1829), Christian Duty (1832), The Church Members' Guide (1838), The Christian Professor Addressed (1838), The Young Man from Home (1839), The Widow Directed to the Widow's God (1849), The Course of Faith, or the Practical Believer Delineated (1853), Female Piety; or The Young Woman's Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality (1853), and so forth. All these and more works passed through several printings in America. Indeed, over seventy editions of James' titles were published in the United States before the Civil War, primarily in New York and Boston, but also in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Concord, New Hampshire, Northampton, Massachusetts, and Charleston,
South Carolina. Most successful of all was *The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation* (1834), a work which passed through many editions and was also distributed by both the Religious Tract Society and the American Tract Society. James sent it over to Patton immediately upon its completion in April, 1834 with directions that proceeds were to go to the American Education Society. Later he was touched by a letter from a frontier settlement relating that though the community was without a minister, a single copy of *The Anxious Inquirer* had passed from hand to hand and resulted in the conversion of twenty-seven persons. By the mid-1830s William Buell Sprague could write a long review of James' works for New Haven's *Literary and Theological Review*, describing him as already a spiritual favorite with Americans and a useful corrective to some American shortcomings.

American evangelicals often received similar exposure in Britain. Edwards and Dwight continued to be published through the first half of the century. James himself produced another edition of *Edwards on Revivals* in 1839 with notes by his New York friend, William Patton. But more contemporary writers also were given British editions. Albert Barnes' *Notes, Explanatory and Practical* on Biblical books, reprinted by the Religious Tract Society, were especially popular, but a host of other American religious authors found a British public—Moses Stuart, Samuel Hanson Cox, Francis Wayland, Lyman and Edward Beecher, Gardiner Spring, George Cheever, Nathan S. S. Beman, Robert Baird, Thomas Smyth, William Buell Sprague, Edward Norris Kirk, Charles Hodge, and many others. Sensational personalities like Charles Grandison Finney understandably inspired several editions. Clearly, some of this transatlantic publication was nourished by strong overseas friendships. Sprague and Patton promoted James in America, and he reciprocated in their interest in Britain. Similar publishing arrangements were evident between Wardlaw in Glasgow and Leonard Woods in Andover.

The result was that Sprague could write in 1834 of the great change that had lately overtaken evangelical society. Formerly, he said (with some exaggeration), Americans were "almost entirely ignorant of the church in other lands," but now close familiarity was the rule. And partly because of this literature Americans developed a keen interest in the great Dissenter
luminaries. James Grant's *The Metropolitan Pulpit*, published in New York in 1839, described at length the appearance, personality, preaching style, writings, congregations, and even salaries of noted Nonconformist ministers—of such Congregationalists as John Leifchild (Craven Chapel), John Morison (Brompton), Matthew Wilks (Tabernacle, City Road), James Sherman (Surrey Chapel), John Burnet (Camberwell), John Blackburn (Pentonville), James Bennett, (Cheapside), Thomas Binney (Weigh House, London Bridge), Andrew Reed (Wycliff Chapel); of such Baptists as Edward Steane (Camberwell), J. H. Hinton (Devonshire Square). Charles Stovel (Little Prescott Street), F. A. Cox (Hackney); of such Wesleyans as Jabez Bunting (Wesleyan Academy, Hoxton) and Thomas Jackson (President of Conference); of Alexander Waugh of the Scottish Secession (Wells Street Chapel), and many others. His work dealt only with London, but Americans were equally familiar with provincial celebrities such as James of Birmingham, Raffles of Liverpool, Jay of Bath, Edgar of Belfast, Urwick of Dublin, and Wardlaw and Heugh of Glasgow.

Secondly, this shared Atlantic intellectual culture served as a foundation for the great age of evangelical reforms, and fundamental to this flowering was the common postmillennial faith. In "respectable Nonconformity" as well as in the principal middle-class American denominations millenarian expectations of catastrophe, Christ's personal return, and radical apocalyptic upheavals were rare. Such "fantasies" were thought chiefly to characterize desperate eccentrics, the more obscure sects, and some despairing Anglican exegetes. "These views are not embraced by Christians generally in the present day," declared William Cogswell, secretary of the American Education Society and author of the most comprehensive program for action, *The Harbinger of the Millennium* (1833). Instead, the sanctified age at the end of history was to be achieved by progressive stages and depended on the strenuous endeavors of dedicated men under the influence of the Spirit. Sabbath Schools, revivals, adequate ministerial supply, missions, Bible and tract distribution, temperance, Jewish conversions, abolition of slavery, peace societies—these were some of the means by which the blessed era would be attained. The spectacular American aberration from this consensus—the fiasco of William Miller's disappointed premillennial
expectations in 1843—simply underscored the commitment of major denominations to a postmillennial vision of Christian progress.

In England more radical millenarian speculations were beginning to attain greater respectability in the 1840s under the influence of Anglican scholarship, but prominent Dissenters continued to adhere to the hope of a perfected society contiguous with history. For his understanding of the millennium Cogswell had depended heavily on the biblical exposition of David Bogue, head of the academy at Gosport and a founder of the LMS. The millennium, Bogue had written, "is that time in which there will be far more eminent measures of divine knowledge, of holiness of heart and life; and of spiritual consolation and joy, . . . than the world has yet seen; and these will not be the attainments of a few Christians, but the general mass." Moreover, this holy society would not be introduced by the "intervention of miracles," but by "moral means." Consequently, gospel preaching, world missions, and reform crusades were urgent prerequisites to the final perfection of men and institutions. Bogue had come out of Scottish Dissent, and the Secession Church also shared his distrust of radical millenarian speculation. On both sides of the Atlantic this meliorist vision of progress toward the millennium powerfully roused believers to action. As President Eliphalet Nott of Union College told the Presbyterian General Assembly as early as 1806, the millennium was at the door and would "be introduced by HUMAN EXERTIONS."

Thirdly, faith in the efficacy of human exertions was also enhanced by soteriological trends on both sides of the Atlantic. The American story is perhaps most familiar. In New England Timothy Dwight, Nathaniel William Taylor, and Lyman Beecher gradually evolved the New Haven theology which enlarged the initiative and responsibility of the individual penitent in the drama of salvation. Men were not passive or predetermined creations, but moral, reasonable, and free. While, tragically, sin was universal in mankind, it was not a consequence of man's nature. No man became sinful except by his own act. While men might choose to sin, they always had "the power to the contrary," and preachers must confront their congregations with the reality of this awful responsibility. Taylor, the principal theologian
of these doctrines, disclaimed any fundamental departure from Reformed tradition or the Westminster Confession. Nonetheless, from these affirmations New England could develop a dynamic program for a new age of revivals and reforms. These Yale innovations did not go unchallenged, even in Connecticut (where the Hartford Seminary was founded in 1833 in reaction), but they gradually won increasing acceptance among many northeastern Congregationalists and Presbyterians and eventually contributed to the Old School–New School Presbyterian schism in 1837.

In Britain somewhat similar trends were affecting several denominations. Wesleyanism, of course, already nourished Arminian traditions. But English Congregationalism was much transformed in the early nineteenth century by the growing acceptance of "Modern Calvinism," a theological reformulation first elaborated by Edward Williams, James' predecessor at Carr's Lane, Birmingham. In his major work, The Equity of Divine Government (1809), Williams criticized the High Calvinism of eighteenth-century Dissent with its emphasis on absolute predestination, limited atonement, and total depravity. Instead, he argued that Christ's death was sufficient atonement for all creatures, and men, admittedly depraved in nature but still possessing free will, should seize on the means of grace provided by God. Williams' exposition, attuned to the new evangelical spirit in Independency, spread rapidly. According to the connexion's great historian, R. W. Dale, it had almost entirely replaced the old orthodoxy by the 1830s.

Similar trends modified the doctrine of Calvinistic Baptists. In England early alterations in Particular Baptist perspective had been initiated by Robert Hall and especially by Andrew Fuller's Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation (1785). With surprising speed the more rigid eighteenth-century scholasticism of John Guyse and John Gill was discarded while the new Baptist zeal for missions rested on the capacity of all peoples everywhere to respond to the gospel. American Baptists experienced like change. By the 1820s Fuller's revision of Baptist teaching predominated throughout the denomination, leading the Princeton Review to observe in 1846 that the Baptist "religious creed" had "undergone a great revolution during the last
half-century; . . . the tendency in many preachers of that denomination is now rather to Arminianism, or the new divinity, than to antinomianism."  

Moreover, in the 1830s England's J. H. Hinton advanced the trend in his controversial works (which indeed were alleged to have been influenced by American theologians). Hinton's principal treatise aimed to demonstrate the harmony of the Holy Spirit's influence with "the free agency of man and the responsibility of the sinner." It stressed that the Spirit induced "a holy disposition" and the "right employment of faculties already existing," but did not "communicate capacity." The old teaching, Hinton complained, had made God unjust and man unfortunate rather than sinful. Hinton's The Work of the Holy Spirit was reprinted in America in 1834 in an edition expanded and "improved" by his immigrant brother at Richmond, Isaac Taylor Hinton. In its review of the work, the New Haven Quarterly Christian Spectator found Hinton's ideas to be "in general, what are called in this country, New England principles."  

Nor was Scottish Dissent free of this "liberalizing" change. In both Scottish Congregationalism and the churches of the Secession traditional Reformed teaching was challenged by preachers, theologians, and students who emphasized the universality of the atonement and human capability and responsibility. In 1840 the Congregational minister at Hamilton, John Kirk, began confronting his hearers with their ability and duty to repent and accept God's offer of salvation. In the same year the Elgin Seceder, James Morison, emphatically stressed the benefit of Christ's death for all men. Both preachers had been influenced by reading Finney's Lectures. Moreover, in 1844 nine students were expelled from Glasgow's Congregational Academy for their contamination with the "American heresy," an act, however, which many churches in the connexion refused to approve. A year earlier Morison, excluded from the United Secession Church for his unorthodox preaching, had founded the Evangelical Union which attracted adherents from the Relief Synod as well. Consequently, Scottish Dissent, like English Dissent, experienced theological currents that could powerfully contribute to evangelical energy, drive, and expansion.

Contemporaries were well aware of the transatlantic dimensions of this movement. As
James wrote to Patton in New York in 1842, the Calvinist "symbols of orthodox churches down almost to the present time, needed to be accommodated more closely to the mental economy and the word of God, and by many modern writers, both in your country and ours, this had been done." Responding to English interest, George E. Paine, the Independent minister in Preston, began a book on American theology in the 1840s. English Congregationalists, moreover, generally sympathized with the American Presbyterian New School. James in 1837 was "astonished and disgusted with the conduct" of the Old School, and two years later he openly declared his sympathy for the New School. "I like their theology better, and I like their conduct better." James Matheson even wrote a letter to the New York Observer expressing his outrage with the Old School. Unlike James and Matheson, conservatives on both sides of the ocean deplored the new divinity but still acknowledged its power. The Scottish Baptist, Robert Haldane, blamed America for Hinton's "heresies," and Thornwell of South Carolina, visiting Britain in 1841, lamented the penetration of "Albert Barnes and New Schoolism" among the Scots. 17

Lastly, in both countries the evangelical zeal and militancy encouraged by these trends helped produce enthusiastic confidence that the world could be transformed and renewed in accord with Christian principles and Biblical prophecy. The practical apparatus for achieving these promised blessings was sought in the great voluntary philanthropic societies. Every major benevolent society had its parallel organization across the sea. The British foundations were often older and served as models for comparable American societies, but Americans sometimes claimed originality and superiority in specific crusades, such as the endeavors for temperance and religious liberty. Both in England and America Anglican and Episcopal evangelicals as well as Quakers and Unitarians were found in the societies, but in many organizations Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist activists predominated. Frequently delegates crossed the sea and were welcomed at the annual anniversaries in London, Boston, or New York. Thus when Codman visited London in 1835 he held multiple commissions and attended the Bible Society, the Congregational Union, the LMS, the Sunday School Union,
the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and a host of other meetings. In the following year
Breckinridge held similar commissions and was overwhelmed by the more than fifty meetings
competing for his attention.¹⁷

Of the societies, the Bible, mission, and tract societies may have been the most central
and at first free of controversy. Because of extensive borrowing the same propaganda and tract
literature could be employed on both sides of the Atlantic. Temperance and anti-slavery
societies attracted evangelicals but could be factional and divisive. The peace crusade, motivated
in part by millennial longings, had Congregational beginnings on both sides of the ocean. Bogue's
On Universal Peace (1813) was followed closely by Noah Worcester's Solemn Review of the
Custom of War (1814) and the founding of the Massachusetts Peace Society (1815) and the
London Peace Society (1816). Heman Humphrey visited London as a delegate from the American
society in 1835. In 1843 the first of the transatlantic peace congresses was held in London's
Freemasons Hall.¹⁸

In this international milieu Dissenters and American denominational leaders commonly
identified the same enemies and took common counsel on how to combat them. And in both
settings evangelical leaders looked upon their tasks as part of a single cause. England and
America were conjointly the hope of the world. James Matheson explained that awful shared
responsibility to the West Riding Missionary Society in 1836:

When we speak of the Church of Christ, we almost naturally think of the Christians
of America and Britain; we do so because we cannot but suppose that the great
mass of believers in Christ are to be found in those two lands. Oh! what hope
would there be for our world if these two nations ceased to be? Now mark
the Providence of God. These nations are essentially one. The same origin,
the same faith, the same language, the same enterprise, & the same desire among
the churches of both countries to convert the world. The mighty work, then,
rests on the very two nations who are one, in all that pertains to the extension
of the Redeemer's kingdom. Surely this marks the finger of God, and fixes the
awful responsibility on these nations, as with the very seal of heaven itself.

But though the parallels and cooperation were everywhere evident, by the end of the 1830s candid and more critical assessments were also being made of each other's religious condition across the Atlantic. Indeed, by that time the naive enthusiasm and hearty fellowship of the early 1830s had given way to some more qualifying and discriminating criticisms. For instance, Americans tended to express impatience with Dissent's alleged deference to Anglican and aristocratic evangelicals; they often condemned proposals of cooperation with the Established Church and urged more militant voluntarist agitation. Sometimes they found the Nonconformists' theological colleges inadequate and Dissenter preaching, if sound, still largely unproductive. Dissent's failure to imitate American revivals and its persistent suspicion of revival apparatus were interpreted as evidence of regrettable timidity and tepidity.31

For their part, Dissenting publications were more cautious in assessing America. They carried disturbing news about the internal strains and failures of American Protestantism—theological controversies in the Reformed tradition, feuds in the Bible, tract, and mission societies, the documented slippage in the churches' vitality and growth, the decline of the voluntary societies, the breakup of the great denominations, and the bitter quarrels over "ultraism" and reforms, most especially over the great slavery question. By 1839 the Eclectic, hitherto sympathetic to American Protestants, described the republic's principal religious publications as defective, sectarian, bigoted, and champions of slavery. And in the next year James Bennett, chairing the Congregational Union, complained of American visitors, "vending their nostrums, recommending us to go out without purse or scrip at the very time when they are begging money of us for their different societies. . . . I think . . . that we ought to exercise great care and discretion in admitting them to our pulpits." And of American practices William Jay added, "I confess I expect no greater good from novelties in religion now, or these extravagances, which are to gain a temporary . . . popularity." In 1843 the Congregational Magazine sceptically
analyzed American statistics boasting of spiritual health and swelling numbers, concluding that the churches lost more than they gained. London and other great towns, it observed dryly, "would not speak of additions of forty or fifty members as evidence of 'large and special outpourings of the Spirit.'" In 1845 these tensions even produced a minor transatlantic controversy; the Congregational Christian Witness published an account of how "the glory of the American church was departing," and was answered in extenso by Albert Barnes and the Philadelphia presbytery.

Corresponding to this greater candor and criticism, disagreements erupted in key areas of the reform culture and called forth divergent responses, arguments, and sometimes serious frictions. After 1836 and in the early 1840s examples of such divergence could be seen in three notable areas especially. First, American evangelicals, proud of their claim of authorship of temperance reform, taxed Dissenters with only tepid support for this crusade, to which they attached the highest importance in furthering the approach of a truly holy society. Second, as we have seen, Dissenters sometimes admired but also often shrank from the boldness of American revivalism. By the 1840s the appearance and successes of the new American revivalism associated with Finney had caused perplexity and uneasiness, evident in our earlier discussion of American revivalism. However, in the 1840s this issue troubled Methodism as well. British Wesleyans, themselves practitioners of a revival tradition, broke into contending parties over the itinerancy of the brilliant American Methodist, James Caughey, until he was called home in 1847. And finally, the refusal of Nonconformists to allow the slavery issue to lie moribund after the impasse of 1836 created implacable new tensions, evident in the London World Anti-Slavery Conventions of 1840 and 1843.
Uneasiness with the tenor of American religion was felt not only with respect to temperance reform in the 1830s and 1840s. Like temperance, American revivalism was both admired and envied, but also it often troubled and disturbed British evangelicals when it appeared in their midst. Wesleyanism was especially to discover this complex reaction in its response to the labors of the American Methodist, James Caughey.

In these decades the Wesleyan connexion was slowly and painfully moving toward an accommodation with a Nonconformist identity. Led by conservative statesmen, notably Jabez and William M. Bunting, the denomination remained Tory in politics, maintained a strict authoritarian discipline, and disapproved any tendency toward more democratic innovations. In sharp contrast to the bitterness of historical memories harbored by the Old Dissent, the Wesleyan leadership still nourished a filial respect and even affection for the Church of England. In the same spirit Wesleyans often subjected Congregationalists and Baptists to unsympathetic and critical attentions. When David Bogue and James Bennett published their famous History of Dissenters from the Revolution to the Year 1808 in 1833 the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine printed an indignant review, complaining of their treatment of Methodists. The Book of Denominations, which the Magazine ascribed to Bennett, received the same treatment and for the same reason. Similarly, the same journal attacked Reed's and Matheson's 1835 account of their American journey, arguing that the authors had exaggerated the "vulgarity and ignorance" of Methodist preachers, and then followed this assault with new criticism of the Congregational Magazine's favorable review of the book. Dissenting authors routinely reciprocated. As late as 1847 the Baptist J. P. Mursell delivered "a well merited castigation" of British Methodism that was applauded by the Eclectic Review. Though cooperation and fraternity were evident in the great evangelical enterprises and the common meetings of the London May anniversaries, the sense of disjunction between Wesleyan tradition and the older Dissenting denominations remained important.

Nonetheless, by the 1840s the posture of the Wesleyan connexion was in
transition. Methodism’s shocked reaction to the Oxford Movement in the Church and the rising dread of Roman Catholicism had begun to move Wesleyans away from lingering Anglican loyalties toward some detente with the bodies of Calvinist Nonconformity. The visiting American Methodist, John Durbin, took note of the trend at the British Conference in 1841 and remarked on the novel tone in Bunting’s Pastoral Address, reflecting his current dictum that “unless the Church of England will protest against Puseyism in some intelligible form, it will be the duty of the Methodists to protest against the Church of England.”

In contrast to the tensions with the Old Dissent British Wesleyan relations with American Methodism after the American Revolution had been cordial though infrequent. In the United States Methodism had independently developed its own characteristics—a capacity for phenomenal growth, a different polity with an episcopate and presiding elders, a successful frontier circuit system, and an orthodox republican abhorrence of governmental support of any religion. Yet American Methodists continued to venerate “Mr. Wesley,” and their Book Concern produced numerous American editions of British Methodist literature. Moreover, the American church received large numbers of emigrant preachers from England and Wales. In England the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine provided continuing notice of American Methodism, though without attaching to it an emphasis far greater than that of other Wesleyan enterprises in the world mission field. Yet, if some exception is made for the three excursions of the eccentric Lorenzo Dow in Britain and Ireland, in the four decades following American independence relations between British and American Methodists were friendly but neither very close nor very influential.

This somewhat distant relationship became more direct after 1820. In that year John Emory was sent by the Baltimore Conference to Liverpool as an official emissary. His mission was to try to reduce the contention that had arisen between the English and American Conferences on the issue of supervising Wesleyan missions in Canada. He worked out a successful compromise, but, more importantly, he made useful acquaintance with Adam Clarke and other leading figures of the English denomination. While in
England Emory also met John Summerfield, a young and successful evangelist in Britain and Ireland. Summerfield had already decided to come to America, and Emory encouraged his visit. Consequently, Summerfield arrived in 1820, conducted "respectable" revivals in New England, New York, and Washington, preached widely against the "Socinians," and won the enthusiastic admiration of American Methodist brethren. He made friends with American denominational leaders, especially Joshua Soule, and when he died in 1825 Nathan Bangs read the burial service.

These renewed contacts opened in 1820 were modestly built upon in the following decades. Periodic embassies were commissioned. In 1824 the English Wesleyans deputed Richard Reece and John Hannah to the Baltimore Conference in the United States, a visit which was reciprocated in 1828 by the Southern Methodist, William Capers, in London. In 1832 the great Adam Clarke was invited to America, though he replied that his age and other commitments forced him to decline. Indeed, the fourteen years after 1820 seemed to achieve an untroubled reestablishment of closer Anglo-American Wesleyan fraternal ties. No mention of slavery was yet made, and the declarations arising from these exchanges were conventionally congratulatory and optimistic. As the American Freeborn Garretson told Reece, "We are one in language and religion. In Missionary exertions, and many other things, you go far before us; but God being our helper, we shall strive to follow on, and imitate your example."

But in the mid-1830s potential frictions began to appear. Tensions developed on several fronts. First, unintentionally American Methodism had long continued to play a role in the development of Wesleyan schismatic movements. Alexander Kilham's Methodist New Connexion in 1787, the Primitive Methodists in 1807, and the Bible Christians in 1815 all owed something to the greater democratic, laic, and voluntarist emphases of the American Methodist example. Indeed, the latter two schisms had been directly influenced by the presence of Lorenzo Dow in Britain in 1805-1807 and again in 1818-1820. Interest in America persisted; William O'Bryan of the Bible Christians had come to America in 1831, and Hugh Bourne of the Primitive Methodists followed
in 1844. In their annual messages to the Wesleyan Conference the American Methodists often stressed the advantages of a free denominationalism unencumbered by an Establishment, and American Methodists traveling in Britain made similar observations. We have already noted the secession of Joseph Rayner Stephens in 1834, in part because of his attachment to the American voluntarist system expounded by Calvin Colton. Officials of the parent Wesleyan Connexion, in contrast, were often sceptical about the American experiment in church-state separation. In all of these schismatic commotions a protest against autocracy, Toryism, and deference to Anglicanism, and an acceptance of voluntarism and a Dissenting identity seem to have been important, and all such themes drew some strength from the American example. (Nor was the fissiparous history of Methodism yet complete. Samuel Warren was to lead a new secession in 1844 to found the voluntarist Wesleyan Methodist Association, and the most famous schismatic rebellion of all, the Fly Sheets upheaval, was to occur in 1849.)

Secondly, though earlier neglected, the issue of American slavery was at last strongly raised in 1835 and 1836, as we have seen. William Lord at the American conference and Wilbur Fisk at the English conference had to confront the sudden appearance of this major emotional division between the two great branches of the Wesleyan community. Their efforts to explain the divergent viewpoints of their respective parent bodies to their transatlantic hosts failed at the outset—a failure strongly renewed in Robert Newton's provocative appearance before the American conference in 1840. It became clear that this issue was totally unresolvable, though perhaps somewhat eased by the great North-South split in the American Methodist churches which occurred in 1845.

But a third area of friction appeared in the role of American revivalism in British Methodism—a problem which had an older history though it became acute in the itinerancy of James Caughey.

Wesleyanism had long employed revival preaching to reach the indifferent and unchurched British populations, especially in the earlier building phase of the connexion. Yet by the 1830s the movement was courting middle-class
respectability, and a strong distaste for any suspicion of "ranterism" was growing. Jabez Bunting, for instance, never forgot his dismay with the disorders of the Manchester "Band Room Methodists," experienced in his youth. The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine had also become sensitive to this issue; in 1841 it responded angrily to a reference in the Congregational Magazine to the Methodist "appetite for religious excitement." Consequently, Wesleyan preaching had tended in time to become more circumspect and restrained. Moreover, the connexion’s historic ties to and continuing reverence for Anglican tradition and its growing stress on an educated pulpit further strengthened a cautionary disapproval of any frenetic or uncontrolled religious expression. Accordingly, in 1842 the American visitor, Durbin, could describe a difference between British and American Methodist preaching:

Their style of preaching . . . is more methodical than ours, and perhaps their sermons are in general more elaborate. They are more calm and staid; neither so discursive in their matter, nor so free and energetic in their manner as we . . . . With them there is more instruction and less excitement.

However, he went too far in adding that "what we call revivals are scarcely known among them."

Though from early in the century the Wesleyan Magazine had published accounts of the successes of American Methodist revivals, the first direct Wesleyan experience with their workings had been supplied by the bizarre Connecticut preacher, Lorenzo Dow. Uneducated and undisciplined but hugely energetic, the seventeen-year-old Dow had begun an irregular career as a Methodist preacher in 1796. In 1798 he began the first of three tours to Ireland and Britain. On this visit, though he remained in the kingdom for eighteen months, he won few converts and made little religious impact. The general population was impervious to his message, and even Methodists found his performance too sensational and disruptive. Moreover, his preaching was politically dangerous. His stay occurred only months after the 1798 Irish rebellion and French invasion when government vigilance was sharpest, and his outspoken republicanism and millenarian prophecies of doom jeopardized all
Methodist freedoms. An alarmed Thomas Coke threatened to report him to the
government and urged him to retire to America.

His second visit from 1805 to 1807 was far more important. By this time
some American Methodists were embarrassed by his eccentricities and warned
overseas brethren. "Alas! shame! shame!," Nicholas Snethen wrote to the
Irish Conference, "Shall it be published in the streets of London and Dublin
that Methodist preachers in America have so departed from Wesley and from
their own discipline as to countenance and bid God speed such a man as Mr.
Dow?" Understandably, Dow's chief impact was now on those Wesleyan splinter
societies that distrusted the trend toward the greater institutionalization
and respectability of Conference and clung to a more primitive model of
Methodism. In 1807 Dow introduced the frontier camp meeting to Britain. At
Mow Cop he gathered a rural population from the West Midlands to spend the
entire day in protracted preaching, prayer, and hymn-singing. He also
circulated American tracts—notably Samuel K. Jennings' "A Defense of Camp
Meetings" which he had published in Liverpool in 1806. The local preacher,
Hugh Bourne, was deeply impressed. He bought Dow's Collection of Spiritual
Songs, Used at the Camp Meetings, in the Great Revival in the United States
of America, experimented with the revival technique himself, and went on to
organize the Primitive Methodist Connexion in 1811.

On Dow's third visit to Britain in 1818-1819 he could work only with the
Primitive Methodists, the Wesleyan Conference having forbidden camp meetings
and resolved that no unauthorized person "from America or elsewhere" be
allowed to preach. The ultimate result of Dow's three British itinerancies
was an abiding uneasiness with American Methodism among some prominent leaders
in the Wesleyan Connexion—a fear of its emotionalism, its revival mechanisms,
and its supposed rejection of discipline, and a conviction that it encouraged
schisms.

These doubts about American Methodism were part of the background of the
controversy raised by James Caughey in the 1840s.

Caughey was born in Ulster in 1810 but raised in upper New York state.
By age twenty he had experienced his conversion in a revival in Troy, and four
years later he was a Methodist elder. Somehow he assembled some learning in Greek, Latin, and divinity, and he acquired extensive preaching and camp meeting experience in New York, New England, and Canada. In Montreal he came to the attention of William Lord. From Quebec in November, 1839 Jabez Bunting received notice of "the peculiar gift . . . of one of our American brethren, the Rev. James Caughey, who attended a Protracted Meeting at Montreal while Mr. Lord was resident there." Caughey, Bunting was further informed, "is contemplating a visit to Europe next midsummer . . . . By him there is no doubt the Protracted Meeting will be introduced at home." Indeed, five months earlier on July 9 Caughey had already received a divine command: "The will of God is that thou shouldst visit Europe."

Consequently, in 1841 and 1842 Caughey was preaching in Ireland with the support of the Superintendent, Thomas Waugh, but with only moderate success. His stay in Dublin, Limerick, and Cork produced some excitement, but his impact was almost wholly within the Methodist community. Even in this quarter he faced some opposition, for an Irish Methodist (with the support of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society) accused Caughey of ignoring the plight of the American slave. Caughey, he charged, had even condemned the anti-slavery agitation as a delusion fostered to detract from his revival.

But preaching in England brought more success. His first notable impact came in Liverpool where he exploited the device of protracted meetings, claimed numerous converts, and won the attention and support of such influential elders as Abraham Farrar and Joseph Beaumont. Over the next few years his reputation grew as he conducted sensational revivals in the great industrial cities of the midlands and the north—Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, and Huddersfield. Caughey later estimated that in his six years of British itinerancy he had made over twenty thousand converts, though his two visits to the Continent (which he managed to schedule between his prolonged British engagements) had far less success.

Caughey's revival style and methods were central to the divisions awakened in the Wesleyan community by his American innovations. Fundamentally, his novel approach was that of a skilled and deliberate professional revivalist,
using proven American techniques refined by his own experience. In short, he "got up" a revival. He prepared advance publicity, distributing thousands of handbills, and he enlisted the help of teams of assistants. His practice was to take over exclusive use of a pulpit for weeks or months and to preach an exhausting schedule of eight to ten sermons weekly. His message was not primarily doctrinal. Instead, he focused on the urgent need to immediately grasp the proffered salvation. His commanding presence, fervent prayers, and desperate appeals to the undecided deeply moved congregations, sometimes even producing extreme agitation and physical manifestations. The imperative call to the rail, immediately following his address, placed a strong element of public coercion on the afflicted. Moreover, even those who had experienced their justification in the past were urged forward: they were importuned to rise to a new spiritual level of entire sanctification.

Opponents focused on his alleged failings. Hostile superintendents asserted that his claimed conversions were illusory or temporary. Analysis indeed indicates that most converts were of evangelical background, frequently already members of Wesleyan chapels, and that attrition from membership often occurred within several years. His performance was viewed as a threat to Wesleyan organization and discipline. He displaced the regular preacher from his pulpit, acknowledged no connexional authority, and won support through independent funding. As William Atherton complained, "Ladies have collected £70 for Mr. Caughey when I could not keep up our funds." Most notoriously, he was accused of deceptive rhetorical tricks. He was charged with prominently displaying the response of well-tutored penitents who thereby—like decoys—lured troubled souls to decision. The reproach was never proved, but Caughey certainly did use particular appeals to individuals, often with announced presentiments of their impending deaths. Bunting expressed the common complaint: "He does say very improper things, and then pauses, and looks as if he had delivered some supernatural communication, such as 'A young man who now sits before me will die within twelve months.'" And Bunting further complained of the pose of divine revelations: "He passes off as revelation things that are either fancy or fraud."
Caughey’s stay in Sheffield through the summer of 1844 was his outstanding success. Productive and triumphant, it was responsible for his rapidly soaring reputation. More so than other Yorkshire centers, Sheffield had been a city hospitable to revival preaching since the opening of the century. But elsewhere—in Hull, Huddersfield, and Birmingham—Caughey’s visits produced enthusiastic praise but also criticism and alarm. The accompanying religious excitement was feared by some Connexion statesmen as identifying Methodism with inanity, hysteria, and fanaticism. Moreover, administrative functionaries could not help expressing concern over Caughey’s irregular "usurpation" of Methodist preaching stations. With characteristic sarcasm Bunting was to make the point in 1845: "No man should occupy a Methodist pulpit for a month to the exclusion of the preachers appointed by the Conference. Every honest man should say that Mr. Caughey ought now to go back and give his fellow-countrymen the benefit of his rare gifts. Let us catch his zeal and fervour; and let the Americans have a chance."

Controversy over Caughey increasingly occupied the sessions of Conference after 1841, at which time early complaint was made against Caughey’s reporting his English triumphs in American papers. By 1843 the Sheffield Conference was disrupted by tense debate between Caughey’s defenders and critics. Abraham Farrar, Joseph Beaumont, and Thomas Waugh testified to the power of Caughey’s evangelical preaching. To Farrar he was unquestionably "instrumental of great good," and Beaumont insisted that Caughey was not "a tourist or an experimenter, but a man of God." "I never felt more unction than under his sermon," he added. But George Osborn responded that "his mode of procedure seems mechanical," and an exasperated Bunting denounced opponents’ admiration for Caughey: "What does Mr. Farrar mean by following Mr. Caughey’s example? Are we all to go to America for a year or two to straighten up?" The debate continued at Birmingham Conference in 1844. There Beaumont and James Dixon defended Caughey as a man of impressive learning with such tributes as "Our want of success is due to a want of continuity of effort... The man is well read; he is a philosopher"; he "has an affinity to great things." Bunting was unimpressed: "The brethren who have given up their pulpits to Mr. Caughey have
been guilty of a great violation of discipline. It gives me, however, unfeigned pleasure that the brethren are all philosophers, and to hear continuity of services so strongly advocated."

The crisis came in August, 1846 at the Bristol Conference. Since the beginning of the year Bunting had been receiving letters from outraged conservatives, arguing for decisive action at the upcoming meetings. "Conference must legislate in reference to American innovations," declared James Kendall, pointing out the danger of Caughey's methods spreading to English brethren. "A class of men exists among us who if not efficiently superintended will soon bring the regularly instituted ordinances of God into utter contempt," he warned. A Liverpool elder went further, offering the opinion that Caughey was a reflection of a degenerate American Methodism: Religion, he argued,

is so generally low . . . in the States, that there extraordinary proceedings are necessary at intervals to impart even the appearance of life; that there are many such parties there as Mr. Caughey and many more able and striking than himself even in his own way; that the same people are converted again and again; . . . that they proceed at intervals to this 'converting' work, as deliberately and mechanically as a builder to raise a house: and nowhere is true and fervent and established piety more scarce than where these proceedings are most frequent.

As a remedy this correspondent suggested to Bunting that a letter be sent to the American bishops requesting Caughey's recall, since his further stay in Britain could only "endanger the peace and unity of our body."

The Bristol Conference of 1846 met in August and was hostile. Two of Caughey's leading foes, William Atherton and Robert Newton, were president and secretary of the Conference respectively, while several of his friends and advocates, especially Joseph Beaumont, were absent. Caughey's opponents were careful to state that they loved revivals, but that the American had committed grave irregularities. He had employed fraudulent preaching techniques. He was uncontrolled, under no discipline. His results were exaggerated;
increases in Methodist membership were chimerical. Most alarmingly, other preachers were now eager to imitate him, and the Connexion was in danger of dissolving into an army of egotistic itinerants. Bunting summed up:

One thing is clear: Mr. Caughey’s visits do occasion differences. God does go out of His ordinary way, but never out of His own way--the ministry of the Word. One reason of our present small increase may be that little good is effected because nothing is expected till Mr. Caughey comes. I would propose that a letter be sent to the American Bishops requesting that they would recall Mr. Caughey whose visit has been so unusually protracted in this country, where he is under no authority.

On August 10 the motion passed. Two days later amid some confusion, the sense of Conference was interpreted as having barred Caughey from all pulpits of the Connexion.

Caughey did not leave Britain at once, nor did he cease preaching his revival. Not all superintendents were immediately aware of the ban, and some apparently ignored it. The decision of Conference was itself directly challenged. Demonstrations and memorials expressing outrage at Caughey’s censure were sent to Conference. And Caughey himself for a time continued to accept invitations to preach--at Huddersfield, Nottingham, York, and elsewhere. Stung by the controversy, Bunting in 1847 responded with angry remarks and a defense of the 1846 action that were unusually shrill: "Mr. Caughey had received £400 for the copyright of his Letters, yet a sillier book it has never been my misfortune to read. . . . I think we must request his Methodist bishops to keep him at home. If they have no control over him, we shall know how to deal with him."

Even now British Wesleyanism was not yet free of Caughey. In 1846 and 1847 he continued to preach in pulpits of the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyan Association. Nonetheless, he had no desire to inspire a secession in the parent Wesleyan Connexion. Finally, in July, 1847 he returned to America, but the denomination he left behind was divided, embittered, and unstable--a condition to which he had made some contribution. Soon Wesleyanism would be
engulfed in the famous Fly Sheets controversy. And it is noteworthy that James Everett, the most prominent leader in that schism, had been a partisan of Caughey, as had some other notables in the breakup. And Caughey was to return to England in the great revival of 1859.

III
* * *

Finally, of all the transatlantic causes, American slavery continued to inspire the most inflammatory and divisive exchanges. Following the debates and confrontations of 1836 the Anglo-American fellowship survived but labored under strain as Nonconformists repeatedly rebuked overseas brethren, and the latter in turn, in a combination of guilt, national justification, patriotism, and increasing asperity, sought to answer British "slurs" on American Protestantism. Yet the same decade also revealed to Nonconformists the extremes of Garrisonian abolition, and from this version of reforming zeal many of them recoiled with a disgust similar to that of most American denominational statesmen. Thus many evangelical Dissenters faced two ways; they became settled in the belief that American brethren lacked serious anti-slavery conviction, and at the same time they renounced American Garrisonianism. Consequently, Dissenting leaders tended to link with the British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and with anti-slavery's "new organization" in New York, an alignment evident at the Second World Anti-Slavery Conference in 1843.

In the wake of the choleric exchanges of 1836 the tide of remonstrances flowing to America sharply increased over the next four years. All of the principal Dissenter denominations--the English and Scottish Congregational Unions, the Baptist Union, the English and Irish Wesleyans, and the Scottish Secession and Relief churches--made clear their indignation at what they perceived to be churches' ambivalence, silence, or ineffectual opposition in confronting slavery. Moreover, individual congregations and county associations were often moved to the same task. Far removed from the American scene, the scattered Congregationalists of Aberdeen and Banffshire still felt compelled to issue a protest to their Congregational brethren in the United States. These "affectionate expostulations" were not always affectionately received. Samuel Miller of Princeton, writing to Andrew Reed in November, 1836, expressed his exasperation with the endless complaints of British brethren against American Christians.

Nonconformists' resolve to combat slavery was also underscored by their patronage
of the escaped slave, Moses Roper. Roper had fled from his North Carolina master to New York where he was befriended by abolitionists and to Boston where he progressed in evangelical religion under the preaching of the transplanted Yorkshire Baptist, Daniel Sharp. But still feeling unsafe, he sailed to England in November, 1835. In Liverpool he was taken in hand by Thomas Raffles and passed on to London in the care of Morison of the Evangelical Magazine. Finally he became a student at F. A. Cox’s Baptist academy where he was expected to become "eminently qualified to instruct the children of Africa in the truths of the gospel." He also joined Cox’s chapel in Hackney. In July, 1837 his Narrative of the Adventures and Escapes of Moses Roper from American Slavery was published with an enthusiastic preface by the Baptist abolitionist editor of the Eclectic, Thomas Price. 83

In this climate Dissent’s fraternal relations with the American South, never very solid, came virtually to an end. The few Southern churchmen visiting England and Scotland routinely experienced unpleasant encounters. Breckinridge of Baltimore, as we have seen, left Britain in 1837, furious with Nonconformity’s strident anti-slavery immediatism and an enemy to further transatlantic exchanges. James H. Thornwell, in Britain in 1841, found that "abolitionism is, if possible, more fanatical here than in America," and concluded his unfavorable assessment with the prayer, "Give me my own country forever." 84 Five years later his fellow-South Carolinan, Thomas Smyth, would encounter more profound humiliations from Congregationalists and Secessers in his native Ireland and in Scotland. Southerners reciprocated. John Howard Hinton’s History and Topography of the United States, republished serially by the Charleston Mercury, created an uproar over Hinton’s strictures on slavery. Copies were burned in New Orleans. In Charleston and Savannah the agency was forced to promise refunds of subscribers’ costs, and eventually a new and expurgated edition had to be produced for the South. 85 Subsequent American printings, edited as "new and improved" by the patriotic Samuel Knapp, reduced Hinton’s critical chapter on "Indians—Negroes" to simply "Indians," a
partial justification of American policy toward the Indians with no mention of blacks at all. 86

Similarly, the American Colonization Society and its Liberian "solution" now enjoyed virtually no credit among English Dissenters. In 1831, as we have seen, the Society's agent, Elliot Cresson, had attracted little support outside the Establishment. Since then prominent American colonizationists, usually Presbyterians, Congregationalists, or Methodists, while visiting Britain had found little acceptance of their arguments. A partial exception was the Scottish J. C. Brown in 1836. Writing in the Congregational Magazine after visiting the United States, he stressed the sincerity of American colonizationist clergy and counselled trust and understanding. But this sympathy was exceptional. The Society's secretary, Ralph Gurley, toured Britain once again in 1840-1841, but he sensibly made his approach chiefly to members of the English and Scottish state churches. He complained that though Garrison was received in Wardlaw's Glasgow chapel "with shouts of applause," he was not even permitted to speak in the city. He wrote a long letter to The Patriot defending his Society, but Josiah Conder, the Congregational editor, charging that the Society's members were "both slave holders and slave sellers," refused to print it. Predictably, the Princeton Review expressed high indignation at Gurley's treatment overseas.87

But exchanges between Nonconformists and professed anti-slavery Protestants in the Northern states were not without some friction as well. When Francis Wayland, the Baptist president of Brown University, published his Limitations of Human Responsibility in 1838 he was severely castigated by the Eclectic and other Dissenter publications. Wayland had attempted to define precisely what duty was demanded by conscience. Slavery was a great evil, he argued, but as citizens Americans were under no moral obligation to act since the Constitution left them without any power to effect change. As Christians their duty was to persuade masters, clearly setting forth the immorality of slavery before the people of the South. Lamentably, abolition societies "excited animosities" and prevented such persuasion.88 The reviewer--probably Thomas Price--thought the piece showed how
slavery was rationalized and morality paralyzed in America, and he expanded on the duty of his readers to withhold fellowship and reprove Northern churchmen when they visited England. The Baptist Magazine was milder but complained that Wayland's argument would indeed cause Christians to "check their exertions, and chill their zeal." Two years later a Birmingham Baptist again complained to the London Anti-Slavery Convention that American Baptists were "deeply implanted in this sin; the President of one of their Universities has endeavoured to do away with moral responsibility on this subject." ⁴₀

Probably the classic debate on these issues took place in the pages of the New York Evangelist and New York Observer in late 1839 and 1840. The controversy began in August, 1839 when James, undoubtedly the best known and most respected Nonconformist to the American public, placed a long remonstrance to American Christians in the Observer. ⁴¹ His message inevitably drew rejoinders. Among others, Sidney Morse undertook to defend the cautious policy of the American churches, citing conventional arguments about the constitutional helplessness of the federal government and the need to persuade, not antagonize, Southern opinion. Other contributions appeared in both New York organs throughout the winter of 1839-1840, occasionally agreeing in part with James, but for the most part the controversy simply underscored the division in American and British perspectives. While the debate lapsed in the summer of 1840 during James' illness and the death of his wife, it was revived in October by the Presbyterian minister from Newark, Ansel Doane Eddy. The exchange won the interest of evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic and even attracted the attention of Southern churchmen, provoking a letter from the noted Baptist, Richard Fuller of South Carolina. ⁴²

James informed Sprague that he had tried to be irenic and reasonable. He understood the constitutional difficulties, but he also protested that he was not ill informed nor dependent on abolitionist propaganda for his opinions. He grieved at the American "disposition to palliate the evils of slavery" and "the strong prejudice against the coloured race in the North." Why, he asked, does America covertly maintain the slave trade? Why
does the North tolerate slavery in Washington, condone the ban on petitioning, and fail to
elect anti-slavery legislators? "Your flag covers a monstrous amount of enormity." And
what could explain the failures of Northern churches? Why do Northern college presidents
and professors argue that slavery is consistent with Christianity? Why do Southern
slaveholders and their defenders preach in New England? Why has the power of pulpit and
press not been mobilized against the crime? Why do Northern ministers who go to the
South so quickly accept slavery? Replies generally insisted that James' charges were
exaggerated and that an aggressive North would be counterproductive to the interests of
the slave. Some letters went on the attack. Why were British Christians silent about
slavery in India, about the opium trade in the East, about their own prejudice against Jews
and gypsies? The exchange was not limited to the American public, for James also
published an account of the controversy in the London Patriot.

Furthermore, this growing rift between Dissent and American Protestants on the
issue was encouraged by those activist American ministers traveling abroad who were also
zealous and uncompromising abolitionists. In 1838 the young George Cheever of Brooklyn
lectured in Britain on slavery in meetings arranged by George Thompson. A year later
Nathan S. S. Beman told the Congregational Union that had he been present at the 1836
Glasgow debate between Breckinridge and George Thompson, he would certainly have stood
with Thompson. And in the same year a begging deputation from Oberlin College, led by
John Keep and William Dawes, portrayed prominent American clergy in the blackest terms
and their College as almost the only true friend of the slave. The combined influence of
such orators helped to foster the impression that true anti-slavery in America was found
only in a courageous minority of Christians, while the denominations maintained an official
silence about the nation's sin and protected the status quo. As Beman reported to
Theodore Dwight Weld on his return to America, "my abolitionism was the finest feather
in my cap, while in England. The time has come when no other minister of the gospel,
than an abolitionist, can be well received in that kingdom... I was solemnly charged
to tell my Christian brethren to send no other minister to them, for they would not receive them."

These differences provided a background to the World Anti-Slavery Convention that opened in London in June, 1840. Dissenters took a prominent role in the Convention's sessions and in framing the admonition to American Christians, but many of them were also shocked by their first major confrontation with Garrisonian radicalism.

The convention was originally promoted by Joshua Leavitt of the New York Evangelist and the Quaker abolitionist, Joseph Sturge of Birmingham, but some thirty British church organizations also sponsored the sessions, including the English and Scottish Congregational Unions, the Wesleyan Conference, the Scottish Seceders, and some Baptist county and regional associations. Over four hundred delegates--three hundred and fifty-five of them from Britain--attended. In debates on issues of religion and slavery Congregationalists and Baptists easily predominated. Most of their celebrities were there. London Congregationalists included John Burnet, Thomas Binney, John Campbell of the Tabernacle, Josiah Conder of the Patriot, John Morison of the Evangelical Magazine, John Woodwarke of Marylebone Chapel, and James Bennett. From outside the metropolis came James Matheson, Edward Baines of Leeds, William Knibb of Jamaica, J. A. James of course, and Sir Culling Eardley Smith. Baptists too were represented by their famous men--F. A. Cox, James Hoby, J. H. Hinton, Charles Stovel, Edward Steane, and Thomas Price of the Eclectic. William Bunting was the outstanding Wesleyan voice. Scotland provided an official Congregational delegation (though it did not include Wardlaw), and its other dissenting bodies were represented by Hugh Heugh of the Secession, Alexander Harvey of the Relief Synod, and Christopher Anderson of the Baptists. The state churches--English and Scottish--had almost invisible representation and provided no leadership.

While most delegates were British, the Americans numbered nearly fifty and supposedly legitimized the claim of a "World Convention." (Membership also included
French delegates, a Spaniard, and a scattering from British colonies—a distribution ratio which forecast the approximate composition of the Evangelical Alliance six years later.) Most of them were abolitionist crusaders of some notoriety. But among them were several strongly committed ministers, Keep of Oberlin, Jonathan Edwards' great-grandson, Charles Edwards Lester of Utica, and three notable Baptists—Nathaniel Colver of Boston's Tremont Temple, Cyrus Pitt Grosvenor of Salem, and Elon Galusha of western New York. Yet in sharp contrast to the Nonconformist delegates, none of the Americans could be considered a prominent leader in his denomination, though Colver was quickly gaining prominence in New England. Both American anti-slavery organizations were represented, but the militant Garrisonians, led at first chiefly by George Bradburn, created the greatest sensation. Garrison himself arrived in London five days late while the Convention was in progress.

A central strategy of the Convention was to exhibit the opposition of Christianity to slavery and thereby isolate the American South from the world Christian community. For the occasion the American crusader, James G. Birney, wrote The American Churches, the Bulwarks of American Slavery. Its declared object was to press the British public to persuade American churches "to purify themselves from a sin that is fast bringing them under its dominion, and that threatens in the end wholly to destroy them." In much the same vein the British and Foreign Antislavery Society Committee (of which the Congregationalists Josiah Conder, George Bennet, and John Woodwork and the Baptists J. H. Hinton and Thomas Price were members) issued a report on the guilt of religion in justifying slavery. Then on its second day the Convention heard a paper by the Oxford Baptist, Benjamin Godwin, "On the Essential Sinfulness of Slavery," considered preliminary resolutions recommending church discipline against slaveholders drawn up by Charles Stovel, and committed the issue for a final formulation to a committee made up of two Congregationalists (James and Knibb), two Baptists (Godwin and Colver), and George Thompson. Finally, on June 18 the Convention adopted the finished resolutions ascribing
responsibility for the continuance of slavery to be "in a great degree" that of churches "which have not only withheld that public and emphatic testimony against the crime," but have "retained in their communion without censure those by whom it is notoriously perpetuated." Then, directly challenging a favorite American defense that complex legal and social obstacles often prevented Christian slaveholders from freeing their people, the resolution insisted that churches must separate from all persons engaged in slave-holding, regardless of "whatever mitigating circumstances it may be attended in their own particular instance." Copies of the decision were to be sent to all churches throughout the world. 103 The practical object was to mobilize the religious censure of the Protestant world against America.

The Convention attracted attention in the press, both British and American journals giving space to the speeches and decisions. American anti-slavery reformers were well satisfied with the results. The Convention resolutions, wrote the American Wendell Phillips, "urging it as a duty incumbent on churches not to hold fellowship with slaveholders, will, I trust, secure the deep attention of every American Christian--especially as we had many of the most influential clergy of England among our members. They were drawn by a committee on which was John Angell James; spoken to by John Burnet, a leader of the Dissenters, and most of the clergy present, and assented to even by Dr. (Frederick Augustus) Cox." 104

But this simple antislavery stance of Nonconformity was not to remain undisturbed. The summer of 1840 also saw the beginnings of bitter sectarian divisions within the ranks of British antislavery, mirroring the recent American schism between "old" and "new" organizations. Dissent was not unaffected. Much of the furor originated with the Garrisonian delegates from America whose alleged anti-church, anti-Sabbath, anti-government principles could not fail to alarm Dissenters. At the very start their attempt in London to secure acceptance of their women delegates aroused opposition from evangelicals, both British and American. Alexander Harvey, Glasgow minister of the Relief
Synod, declared that women leaving their "own sphere" and taking part in public meetings was contrary to God's Word. Burnet agreed: it would be better to abandon the Convention than to accept women delegates. Colver assured British brethren that their American friends would not have crossed the Atlantic if ladies had been invited. Galusha cited the edifying example of Queen Victoria who sent the Prince Consort to represent her at meetings. ("I have no objection to woman's being the neck to turn the head aright, but don't wish to see her assume the place of the head.") Morison warned darkly that the Convention was on the point of breaking up, and Stovel angrily denounced the Garrison faction for raising the issue: "If it tears your Societies to pieces in the United States, why would you tear in pieces our Convention?" More tactfully, James appealed to the "old organization" men that accepting women would prejudice rather than promote the antislavery cause. Eventually, on a motion offered by the Nathaniel Colver, the Garrisonian effort was defeated.

But Garrison himself arrived in London a few days later on June 17, and friction intensified. At a reception for foreign delegates Garrison "stirred up the ire of Dr. Hoby," the Baptist delegate to America in 1835, accusing him of "having proved recreant to the cause of abolition when in America." George Bradburn attacked Hoby's greater companion, Frederick Augustus Cox, as well as other British clergy, in the Convention itself, provoking an angry response. By the end of the meetings Dissent had been made aware of the "ultraism" of many of the Americans.

Accordingly, the denominations, while champions of anti-slavery, could not approve the Convention entirely. W. M. Bunting protested allegations made there that the English Wesleyan Conference had silently accepted American Methodism's exclusion of Negro evidence in church trials. The Baptist Magazine denounced the disruption by the "ultraists." The English Congregational Union took deliberate official action. It refused to pass a resolution congratulating the Convention and instead insisted on discriminating between acceptable and unacceptable antislavery doctrines. Members expressed dislike of
the "female question." Matheson, the delegate to America in 1834, bitterly inveighed against attacks made upon him by Garrisonians. John Burder expanded on the "injury done to a good cause by ultraism and calumny." Finally, the Union officially deplored "the extravagance and bitterness, the violence and irregular proceedings by which some American abolitionists have brought discredit on their holy cause." Nor did the censure end there. The strongly abolitionist Eclectic denounced the anti-church invective of the Americans, and Andrew Reed returned to the subject of Garrisonian slanders in the next session of the Congregational Union in 1841. 107

Throughout Garrison's stay and under the leadership of his followers after his departure British antislavery was rent by divisions that further troubled Nonconformist reformers. The London office of the B. & F. A. S. S. remained opposed to "ultraism," but several of the provincial societies experienced controversy and eventually schism. Like the anti-Garrison "new organization" in New York, the principal Dissenting denominations generally opposed mixing antislavery with other radical causes such as American nonresistance, temperance, the "woman question," or British Chartist agitation. Some American brethren, notably Nathaniel Colver, were also active in warning British correspondents to be wary of the "infidelity" of Garrison and his followers. Perhaps the most damaging figure in these Garrisonian commotions was John Anderson Collins, sent to Britain by Garrison in November, 1840 to raise money. Collins was strongly anticlerical and belligerent; his Right and Wrong was a tirade against American churches and the "betrayals" of the recent World Antislavery Convention. Later in life he became an anarchist and socialist. He had no success in London, but he managed to create crises in several provincial organizations. 108

The most notable struggle took place in the Glasgow Emancipation Committee, of which Wardlaw was one of the founders and where Scottish Congregational and Seceder leadership had been important. Writing to Garrison from Glasgow in August, 1840, William Smeal, the Quaker secretary of the G. E. S., reported that "a note from Dr.
Wardlaw is just to hand, putting to me the question,—'Is it intended that the female
American Delegates, to whom so repeated & pointed allusion was made on Monday evening
last, take any part in the proceedings of our Annual Meeting—or that they appear on the
platform in their capacity of Delegates.' The question was the opening of a protracted
battle for the G. E. S. The contest was bitterly fought and for eight months remained
undecided, but by April, 1841 the G. E. S. had been won over to the Garrisonian camp.
On May 2, Collins could write to Garrison:

The clergy who rule by the general consent on infidel and christian and hence
hold the press, pulpit and popular opinion in their own possession, are in
great consternation. Rev. Drs. Wardlaw Hugh (sic) & King & many others
exercise all the cunning of politicians, all the bitterness of slaveholders & all
the cant on the question of slavery as our blackhearted new organization
whiners. They are frightened. They are mad . . . . The cause of old
organization has taken a deep and lasting hold of the true friends of this
country.\textsuperscript{110}

Some Dissenters remained with the reorganized G. E. S., notably several ministers of the
Secession, but the best known clergy, the Congregationalists Ralph Wardlaw and Granville
Ewing, and the Seceders Hugh Heugh and David King, and still other antislavery veterans
felt compelled to resign. Wardlaw later listed their reasons: "the mixing up of the one
definite object of the institution with others," the "discussion of these at uproarious public
meetings," the condemnation of "excellent men, members of the American Antislavery
Society, who could not go in with the ultraism, or identify themselves with the wild
eccentricities," the "wholesale defamation of these men, on the authority of an individual
and a stranger"—"these and other considerations, rendered secession a demand of
conscience. . . . It was the dictate, not of choice, but of moral necessity.\textsuperscript{111}

Garrisonians had success also in the Manchester, Bristol, and Dublin societies, and
with the Edinburgh Ladies Antislavery Committee (though not with the main Edinburgh
organization). Some Dissenters were sympathetic to the intransigence of the radicals with consequent strife in their connexions. It was at this stage that Caughey was attacked in Ireland by the Hibernian Society, and a Dublin Wesleyan published three open letters chiding him for his supposed indifference to the cause of the slave. Generally, however, "respectable" Dissent tended to be repelled by the radicalism, anticlericalism, alleged infidelity, and reported Chartist connections of the Garrisonian movement.  

Indeed, by the early 1840s the slavery issue had come to a kind of dead center in relations between American Protestants and British Dissenters. Though the latter were now far more sensitive to the "ultraist" side of American abolition, they still remained dissatisfied with the unwillingness of American denominations to adopt a policy of overt and aggressive hostility to the entire slave institution and impatiently regarded American fear of consequences to church and nation as continued bondage to sin. Many American churchmen, for their part, unless they had accepted the demands of radical abolition, viewed British Dissenters as foolishly simplifying a problem of immense consequence and complexity. From the 1840s until the outbreak of the American Civil War there would be little movement from this stalemate, as the collapse of the Evangelical Alliance would soon illustrate.

Thus the second World Antislavery Convention held in London in June, 1843 produced little result. By reason of the Garrisonian schisms, several of the provincial organizations refused to attend, the Hibernian society specifically objecting to the exclusion of women. Consequently, the convention was dominated by the central office of the B. & F. A. S. S., and most of the Americans present also belonged to the anti-Garrison "new organization" centered in New York. Their most prominent representatives were Joshua Leavitt of the New York Evangelist and Lewis Tappan, while American anti-slavery clergy were represented only by the Congregationalists Jonathan Blanchard of Cincinnati, Hiram H. Kellogg, president of Knox College in Illinois, and James W. C. Pennington, the black minister of Hartford, Connecticut. The convention was less noticed than the previous
meeting three years earlier and its attention was fixed more on free trade as an anti-slavery strategy than on religious boycott. Nonetheless, religious papers were assigned. James produced a report on the role of religion, and Wardlaw prepared a statement on the place of missions in the antislavery cause. After the convention Kellogg, who was primarily seeking money for his college, lectured widely on the infidelity of the American Garrisonian party, while Pennington's speeches dispelled the notion that all black abolitionists belonged to the "old organization."  

But perhaps the most typical feeling among delegates was found in James' troubled complaint that Americans commonly rehearsed the evils of slavery without providing any guidance on what effective actions British evangelicals might take. In the end his resolutions, endorsed by the assembly, simply repeated the action of the 1840 Convention, expelling slaveholders from all Christian fellowship. 

Indeed, for antislavery Dissenters the options were limited. Since 1836 they had sent repeated remonstrances to American brethren. Again in 1840–1843 both before and after the London conventions they had intensified these urgent appeals. American responses to these letters varied. British Congregational messages to American Congregationists usually generated supportive responses from the state associations. But the same appeals to the Presbyterian General Assembly elicited more ambiguous and cautious answers. British Wesleyan insistence that American Methodists adhere to the denominations' historic censure on slavery was delivered again by Robert Newton and John Hannah to the Baltimore Conference in May, 1840, but it provoked only a harsh official response prepared by the Southern delegate, William Capers. Despairing of moving official church structures to active assault on slavery, some Dissenters had already determined to encourage American religious abolitionists engaged in battle with those structures. The development was most evident in the case of the English Baptist Union. 

Under Hinton's chairmanship in 1838 a particularly forceful warning to all Baptist churches in the United States had been sent by the English Union. It expressed shock at
Baptist indifference to slavery and deep horror that some American Baptists even defended the sin. In 1840 the Union again approved a strong reprimand (moved by Thomas Price) but did not rest there. It also forged an alliance with Northern anti-slavery insurgent Baptists. Probably with Colver’s help, the Baptist Magazine was now able to give a full account of the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention which had met in New York in April, 1840, publishing the full text of that Convention’s address to Southern slaveholding Baptists and the Southerners’ unrepentant replies. The Magazine noted also that Colver, Cyrus P. Grosvenor of Worcester, and Elon Galusha of western New York would soon come to London as anti-slavery Baptist delegates to the World Convention. When the men arrived in England the Union held a special meeting of welcome with resolutions of solidarity and speeches from Hinton and Stovel. The new cooperation was again evident when in November the Union sent a sharp reproof to southern Baptist slaveholders with copies to the American Anti-slavery Baptists. At the same time the Union commissioned F. A. Cox to write The Scriptural Duty of Churches in Relation to Slaveholders

Professing Christianity. The tract concluded that if the Southerner would not hear repeated admonitions, then "regard to truth, virtue, piety" demanded that "when the slaveholder . . . asks communion at the table of the Lord . . . we should obey the injunction of the apostle, FROM SUCH TURN AWAY." 

Furthermore, Colver was determined to invoke the alliance for service at the next Triennial Conference in Baltimore. He wrote letters to British Baptists urging the "importance of a proper delegation from England to our Triennial Convention. . . . Come what will, some of us will be at it, and we shall much need your help." In another appeal published in the Baptist Magazine, he demanded English "delegates with instructions not to seal their lips, but to open them for God and the dumb; . . . men too, that will . . . stand by us at that time of fearful struggle." Three years later British Baptists congratulated the American and Foreign Antislavery Mission Society when in July, 1843 it announced its separation from the Baptist General Convention in a special letter to
British Baptists. Finally, when the American Baptist church succumbed to its great North-South schism in 1845, the Baptist Magazine could only conclude that the "jealousies of the slaveholders in the southern states have at length effected . . . disruption." 121

* * *

These frictions between British and American churches demonstrated that despite the acknowledged need for partnership, the transatlantic relation could still be unsettling in either direction. For the most part, it was American enthusiasms that produced some misgivings in British Dissent. So it was with respect to temperance, voluntaryism, and revivalism. But in Dissenters' determination to secure an end to American slavery, British Nonconformity also created tensions and even made some contribution to the upheaval of the 1840s in the American denominations.

Indeed, by that decade the naive enthusiasm and hearty fellowship of the early 1830s had given way to some more qualifying and discriminating criticisms. For instance, Americans tended to express impatience with Dissent's alleged deference to Anglican and aristocratic evangelicals; they condemned proposals of cooperation with the Established Church and urged more militant voluntarist agitation. Sometimes they found the Nonconformists' theological colleges inadequate and Dissenter preaching, if sound, still largely unproductive. Dissent's failure to imitate American revivals and its persistent suspicion of revival apparatus were interpreted as evidence of regrettable tepidity and timidity.

For their part, Dissenting publications were also more cautious in assessing America. They carried disturbing news about the internal strains and failures of American Protestantism—theological controversies in the Reformed tradition, feuds in the Bible, tract, and mission societies, the documented slippage in the churches' vitality and growth, the decline of the voluntary societies, the breakup of the great denominations, and the bitter quarrels over reforms, most especially over the great slavery question. By 1839 the Eclectic, hitherto sympathetic to American Protestants, described the republic's principal
religious publications as defective, sectarian, bigoted, and champions of slavery. And in the next year James Bennett, chairing the Congregational Union, complained of American visitors, "vending their nostrums, recommending us to go out without purse or scrip at the very time when they are begging money of us for their different societies. . . . I think . . . that we ought to exercise great care and discretion in admitting them to our pulpits." By 1845 these tensions even produced a minor transatlantic controversy; the Congregational Christian Witness published an account of how "the glory of the American church was departing," and was answered by Albert Barnes and the Philadelphia presbytery. \(^{122}\)

Yet despite these strains, the deep interest in the transatlantic connection and cooperation persisted. The shared responsibility for Christian progress in contemporary history was too great to be allowed to flag.

But soon transatlantic attention was to be drawn from England to Scotland. While Scottish Congregationalists, Baptists, and Seceders had shared the interest of English Dissenters in American voluntaryism, revivalism, and temperance and similarly pilloried the American churches' complex relation to slavery, the great Church of Scotland had displayed far more caution and moderation on all of these issues. Moreover, while its prestige was high with all the American denominations, it nourished especially close relations with the conservative Old School Presbyterians. Now during the early 1840s religious attention, both British and American, was becoming fixed on the great controversy that was promising to break up the Scottish national church. The beginnings of the Free Church of Scotland were also to be deeply intertwined with the history of American Protestant churches.