# Law, Morality, and Abolitionism

# Law, Morality, and Abolitionism: Francis Wayland and Antislavery in America

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To my children, Olivia-Grey, Ari, Taylor-Ashton, and Callie-Reagan. Thank you for your love and patience while Dad worked extra hours to complete this project. You kept me laughing while I was laboring under time constraints.

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# PREFACE

# FRANCIS WAYLAND: LIFE AND LEGACY

In 1860 E.N. Elliott, President of Planter's College, Mississippi, penned in the opening lines of the proslavery anthology, *Cotton is King* (1860), "There is now but one great question dividing the American people, and that, to the great danger of the stability of our government, the concord and harmony of our citizens, and the perpetuation of our liberties, divides us by a geographical line." The editor further spoke of "estrangement, alienation, enmity" arising "between the North and the South." Though Wayland was not the intended subject these words were an apt summary of his life. Wayland argued with equal passion for the sinfulness of slavery and for the need to maintain an unbroken fellowship with southern slaveholders. Perhaps no other evangelical and intellectual figure of his generation was so pressured by his peers to support immediate emancipation due to the general respect that his name generated in the North and South alike. The geographical line of which Elliott wrote, was precisely the division Wayland worked to avoid. Furthermore, the expansion of slavery that produced the "estrangement, alienation, enmity" between the nation politically was the same force that tore at the nation's denominational unity. His efforts to hold these centrifugal poles together proved no more successful than those of his political counterparts.[1]

This work explores the life and labors of Francis Wayland (1796-1865) and argues that Wayland held the centrist position in the struggle against slavery and that his life represented a microcosm in the growth of northern antislavery sentiment. He was widely noted as a Baptist pastor, president of Brown University, educational and humanitarian reformer, economic, political, and philosophical theorist, and antislavery advocate. He wrote on a broad number of subjects, but he was best known for his educational reform, economic and moral philosophy, and his famed debate with fellow

[1] E.N. Elliott, ed., *Cotton is King and Proslavery Writings: Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright* (Augusta, Ga.: Prichard, Abbott & Looms, 1860), iii.

Baptist divine Richard Fuller. Widely respected in his own day and the author of a leading text on moral philosophy that was notably used in southern colleges, Wayland makes an interesting case study in the intellectual world of antebellum America. Although comprehensive, I focus on his antislavery views and situate his life within the broader antebellum context.

A brief summary of his life will help provide insight into his contributions and significance. Francis Wayland was born to middle-class parents in New York City. His father was a successful businessman, but gave up his career to become a Baptist minister. Wayland entered Union College in 1811, graduated two years later, and studied medicine until 1816. Following a religious experience, he left medical school to attend Andover Theological Seminary in preparation for the ministry. From 1817 to 1821 he worked as a tutor at Union College, but left this position to pastor the First Baptist Church of Boston from 1821-1826. Twice married, his first wife died in 1834 and he remarried in 1838. The father of four, his only daughter died at fifteen months, but his three sons survived his death. His son Francis Jr., was particularly prominent as he graduated from Brown in 1846, studied law at Harvard, worked as a probate judge in Connecticut in 1864, lieutenant-governor from 1869-1870, and served as the dean of Yale Law School from 1873-1903. His son Heman Lincoln, served as pastor, military chaplain, professor of rhetoric and logic at Kalamazoo College in Michigan and president of Franklin College in Indiana from 1870-1872. Although Francis Wayland was not particularly noted as a pastor, some of his sermons were widely circulated. He temporarily accepted a chair in moral philosophy and mathematics at Union College, but was soon thereafter unanimously chosen as President of Brown University, a position he held from 1827-1855. At Brown, he was instrumental in revising the curriculum by adding science, modern languages, and electives. He further expanded Brown's endowment and campus size. His administration has been touted as the "golden age of the university."[2]

An avid reformer, he worked tirelessly in educational reform, hospital administration, public library fundraising, and prison reform. A noted author, he wrote on a variety of subjects. On education, his key works were his *Thoughts on the Present Collegiate System in the United States* (1842) and the *Report on the Condition of the University, Report to the Corporation of Brown University on the Changes in the System of*

[2] "Francis Wayland" in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds, *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols., (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1936) 19:558-560.

*Collegiate Education* (1850). His political views were laid out in *The Duties of an American Citizen* (1825), *The Affairs of Rhode Island* (1842), and *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* (1838) and *The Duty of Obedience to the Civil Magistrate* (1847). On economics he wrote *Elements of Political Economy* (1837) and on philosophy he summed up his views in *Intellectual Philosophy* (1854).

Although he did not consider himself a theologian, his *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* argued for complete congregational autonomy in the Baptist churches. Although not considered a leading pastor, his two sermons "The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise" (1823) and "The Duties of an American Citizen" (1825) were published to wide acclaim. His most noted work, *The Elements of Moral Science* (1835) sold more than 100,000 copies, was well received in Europe, and became the leading textbook on moral philosophy in American colleges for nearly fifty years. This work was widely used in southern colleges despite its various antislavery passages. When the sectional crisis heated up, many schools pulled his textbook, but others simply edited its antislavery portions and continued to use it. This fact alone testifies to its importance as a nineteenth century intellectual work.[3]

Despite holding antislavery views, Wayland shied from more activist political involvement. He did not support making slaveholding a test for Christian fellowship and argued tirelessly that severing theological ties would lose northern Christians whatever influence they might have with their southern brethren. Nevertheless, in a series of journalistic exchanges with proslavery advocate and fellow Baptist minister Richard Fuller of South Carolina, he argued that slavery was not sanctioned in Scripture. Published in book form under the title *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution* (1845), this work was widely read by both northerners and southerners alike. Particularly noted was the congenial tone of the exchange from both parties.

The political crises' of the 1840s and 1850s prompted Wayland to choose sides, as it did so many other Americans of his day. His general silence on antislavery was broken with the Mexican-American War, the Wilmot Proviso, the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Convinced that the South was determined to spread slavery beyond its current boundaries, Wayland supported the Free Soil Party and later the Republican Party. When the Civil War broke out, he threw his support behind Lincoln, the Union cause, and immediate emancipation. His

[3] Francis Wayland and H.L. Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1867; 1972), I: 385.

support added an important intellectual voice to the emancipationist fray, one that many of his friends considered both welcoming and long overdue.

His support for the war was somewhat of a departure for him. Although not a pacifist, he was onetime president of the American Peace Society. He opposed the Mexican War, dubbing it "wicked, infamous, unconstitutional in design, and stupid and shockingly depraved in its management." Yet the Civil War was a war of liberation, designed "to bring slavery forever to an end." He urged citizens to dutifully support the federal government in prosecuting the war for so righteous a cause. During the war, Wayland wrote dozens of letters to army chaplains, congressmen, and senators. In 1862 he was appointed a member of the Board of Visitors to the West Point Military Academy and spent four years working for the Christian Commission. Toward the end of the war, he wrote numerous letters debating how best to elevate the status of recently emancipated slaves. Like many pastors, he sermonized a eulogy following the death of Abraham Lincoln, and similar to Lincoln's Second Inaugural, Wayland encouraged all to "lay aside all malice and revenge" and to "do justice to the high as well as the low." [4]

To further establish the religious context of antebellum America, it is crucial to measure evangelical strength in antebellum America. In this study, I define "evangelical" as those denominations which adopted the "new measures" such as the revivalism and voluntarism methods of the Great Awakening, and were generally orthodox in their theology. In 1775 ministers numbered one per fifteen hundred inhabitants, but by 1845, ministers numbered one per five hundred. Periodical publications of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists became a hallmark of their numerical growth and cultural influence, but unlike the colonial era, Antebellum evangelicalism was marked by competition and fragmentation. No longer addressed to gentleman and learned clergymen, these periodicals were marketed to the masses. Furthermore, most colleges were denominationally based schools. This fragmentation and denominationalism should not obscure the level of interdenominational cooperation that often existed in reformist and humanitarian work.[5]

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[4] Wayland and Wayland, *A Memoir*, 2:55, 260-279; quotes on 55 and 274.

[5] On these new intellectual and theological trends see: Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1989). On antebellum reform and humanitarian work see: Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reformers and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 2nd ed. (Hill and Wang, 1997).

Numerically, even conservative estimates place evangelical church membership at 3.5 million, and adding on twice that many non-members who attended, over 10 million Americans, or about 40 percent of the population, had ties to or close sympathy with evangelical Christianity. Evangelical influence increases if all those who were products of a Protestant upbringing are factored in. Richard Carwardine adds that it had become "the largest, and most formidable, subculture in American society."[6] American Christianity was denominationally diversified, no longer overshadowed by Puritan elites. Methodists and Baptists, in that order, grew exponentially over their Congregationalist and Presbyterian forbearers that had once boasted greater strength. Yet collectively, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists made up 70 percent of all Protestants.[7] In theology and hierarchal structure however, Methodists and Baptists were openly antitraditional, anticlerical, anticonfessional, and anticreedal, thus squaring themselves with the new American ethos.

Often overlooked by historians in standard interpretations of the origins of the Civil War, are the denominational splits Presbyterians (1837), Methodists (1844) and Baptists (1845). Theological ruptures, no less than political ones fractured the nation. Denominational schisms sectionalized voting behavior. They also set a poor example for politicians who noticed that supposedly unified evangelicals (in theological belief, but not political belief) could not mend their differences. Northern and Southern evangelicals interpreted these events differently. Southerners argued that a tyrannical northern majority violated denominational constitutional integrity and they easily transferred this lesson to the political crises over slavery, the U.S. Constitution, and their "minority status." Northerners understood it differently, particularly in their argument that southerners violated the spirit of their denominational integrity by their legal (but ungodly) practice of slaveholding. In this sense, southern slaveholding was a legal right, but equally a moral failure.

These dissimilarities were rooted in the different political and cultural reality found in the North and South. Northern culture and society as a whole, was more urbanized, industrialized, economically diversified, and ethnically mixed through immigration. The greater range of economic choices and institutional options prevented the narrower social stratification

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[6] Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 44. 1-49.

[7] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 270 for statistical and numerical date on denominational growth.

found in the agrarian South. The New England ministry evolved as well. The historian Donald Scott noted that the colonial pastoral relationship was one of public order, harmony, deference, social stability, hierarchical structure, and character-building, while the nineteenth-century order was one of electoral pandering, inverting hierarchical ladders, institutionalized factionalism, and self-interest. The New England clergy, formerly the guardians of public order in localized communities, became professional theologians engaged in benevolent institutions and moral societies. They worked outside the new democratic party system which eroded the moral and social landscape. Moreover, eighteenth century collegiate education trained pastors for social leadership within their proper station, but nineteenth pastoral training was oriented toward occupational training and preparation. The creation of seminaries removed theology from the center of the university to professionalized schools. The result was that the "formalization and standardization" of professional ministerial training removed them from the larger socialization of the university.[8]

Much of these theological realities applied to the South, but in general theology rooted itself differently in the South. In general, the conservatism of Southern culture more easily maintained conservatism in Southern theology. By contrast to the North, Southern culture remained tied to tradition, localism, patriarchy, deferential politics, and notions of honor and shame, where community loyalty and interpersonal relationships protected traditionalism. Value was rooted in community identity, not individuality. This explains why notions of honor, duty, code, and shame remained salient realities in the South, where reward or dishonor was conferred upon the individual by the community as a whole. Southern theology, and by default Southern justification for slavery, was rooted in the defense of Christianity, itself another peg in the maintenance of the social order. The Southern slaveholding dilemma, was how to bridge the widening gap between guarding the traditionalism that welded to slaveholding and the modernization of the industrializing world.[9]

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[8] Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978). For northern theologians in general see Charles C. Cole, *The Social Ideas of Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860* (New York: Octagon, 1966).

[9] On religion and southern culture see: Donald Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1978); Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., *Religion in the Old South* (Jackson: University of

Timothy L. Smith concisely summed up antebellum Protestant religion by arguing that "four fundamental changes" marked "the inner life of American Protestantism." First, lay participation and control replaced the traditional reliance on the clergy for church organizational work. Second, churches worked more frequently through interdenominational channels rather than competitively. Third, ethical and moral concerns replaced dogmatism in theological writings. Fourth, Arminianism supplanted Calvinism in most theological circles.[10] The irony of antebellum religion is that revivalism in religion both multiplied conversions and lay involvement and yet weakened the prestige and authority that colonial era clergymen once enjoyed. Theology was no longer the purview of the educated clergy, but rather accessible to the mass populace in a more democratic form. Revivalism and democracy then was a tradeoff for a once more exclusive network of clergymen.

Slavery was the chief ideological divide engulfing the nation politically and theologically. Slaveholders developed elaborate proslavery arguments in defending the peculiar institution. Biblical, no less than secular arguments, formed the heart of proslavery defenses. Theological arguments, despite the Old School/New School divisions of Presbyterianism, then, did not determine the fracturing of the evangelical camp, but rather the slavery issue shaped the heart of theological division among Northern and Southern Protestants. Evangelicals were no more sheltered or immune from the political turmoil of the nation as were their more secular counterparts, a fact that politicians the likes of Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun easily noticed.

Intellectually, American thought overlooked a gulf between the revivalism born of the Second Great Awakening and the increased secularization of the university. No longer dominated by ecclesiastical issues, American institutions of higher learning were swayed preeminently by science, but also philosophy, law, moral philosophy, and political theory. Intellectual historian Bruce Kuklick, notes that the creation of divinity schools shifted theology from the center of intellectual activity to

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Mississippi Press, 1985); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Edward R. Crowther, *Southern Evangelicals and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 2000).

[10] Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-America* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 80.

a relegated corner in the university. Lost as well was the once classical grounding of the medieval universities.[11]

Theologically, the shift from Calvinist established churches in the colonial period gave way to democratized Christianity overwhelmingly dominated by Methodists and Baptists. The revivalism and reforms of the nineteenth-century added to evangelical numbers, but evangelical success brought a backlash in that the closer the church wed itself to the nation, the nation inevitably influenced the church. As the nation secularized, so did the church. Ironically then, the "Christianizing" of the nation led to the secularization of the church. These trends continued throughout the Civil War and left a deep impact following the war. What was lost was not evangelical numerical strength, but rather its cultural and political influence. The secularizing trends that developed more rapidly in Europe, although already rooted in American thought and culture, swiftly engulfed American evangelical strength that became oriented toward Social Gospel pragmatism. American theological development became increasingly intellectually weak, pietistic, fideistic, and defensive in the new scientific corporate driven America.

If as Edmund Morgan argued, the statesman replaced the theologian following the American Revolution, particularly in New England, the theologian was equally usurped by the scientist in post Civil War America.[12] The nation's scientists, not the nation's theologians, became the new standard bearers of national consciousness. If anything, the war revealed the declining intellectualism in American theology since the passing of the Puritan and Calvinist framework. The battlefield, not the pulpit settled the crisis facing the nation. This moral failure easily translated into political irrelevance following the war. Consistent with the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher or Soren Kierkegaard, religion became more private and less public. Mark Noll described the war as a "theological crisis" and a failure of Northern and Southern theologians to settle the greatest moral question of the day.[13] Francis Wayland, mindful of these changes, became a leading evangelical critic in lamenting the integration of the pulpit and politics. His *The Duty of Obedience to the Civil Magistrate* (1847) was timely sermonized following the Mexican

[11] Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 87.
[12] Edmund S. Morgan, "The American Revolution Considered as an Intellectual Movement," in *Paths of American Thought*, ed., Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Morton White (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 11.
[13] Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

War. His immediate intent was opposition to the war, but its broader meaning elevated private conscience over immoral legislation. Implicit in his argument, is that that his fellow evangelicals were not discriminatory enough in separating the precepts of scripture from the precepts of their government. Too often, he argued, evangelicals merged the two into one.

Politically, the nation drifted toward disunion as the slavery debate became both central to politics and sectional in nature. Although slavery was prohibited throughout the Northwest Territory, the three-fifths compromise gave the South political leverage out of proportion to its white population, and while the slave trade was banned beginning in 1807, it left the door open for an additional twenty years of direct importation from Africa. The slave question remained peripheral to mainstream politics until the Missouri Compromise segregated slavery along the Mason-Dixon Line. The consensus was that an even balance of free and slave states would ensure equality of representation, but in reality, it only delayed an eventual showdown over slavery. Coupled with the more rapidly expanding population of the North, and in part due to increased immigration in the 1840s and 1850s, the South was losing its political leverage.

The inauguration of William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* in January 1831 denominated a new chapter in American abolitionism. His demand for "immediatism" offended both Northern and Southern sensibilities, both in his denunciation of slavery as sinful, and in his insistence for immediate emancipation. With the exception of the Quakers, mainstream Protestant denominations had lost their abolitionist fervor that marked the immediate decades following the American Revolution. Garrison, disgruntled with the churches' inconsistent response to slavery, became rather heterodox doctrinally, and argued from outside an evangelical framework. But evangelicals, such as Lewis and Arthur Tappan and Theodore Weld, did join the abolitionist cause. Despite the mails campaigns of 1835 and the Gag Rule, slavery remained a moral issue, rather than a heated political one until the Mexican War opened new western territory to expansion. The question of whether it would be slave or free, and the efforts of the Wilmot Proviso to keep slavery out permanently, not only made slavery central to politics, but split the political parties along sectional lines. The decades of the 1850s became no less than an avalanche of one political crisis after another. [14]

[14] See William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume I:. Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) for a detailed discussion of the unfolding events.

Following the Mexican War and the Wilmot Proviso, slavery tore the political landscape asunder as politics became increasingly sectional in nature. For northerners, the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act awoke moderate northerners to the dangers of the Slave Power. For southerners, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry and the election of Lincoln convinced many that their interests were best served outside the Union. David Potter, for example, argued that the Fugitive Slave Bill seemed to put the government "into the business of man-hunting" and the Dred Scott ruling empowered the extremists and "cut the ground from under the moderates" and acted to "impair the power of Congress to occupy middle ground."[15] Michael Holt noted that the Kansas-Nebraska Act "ignited an explosion of rage in the North." Holt further added that John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry "traumatized many Southerners."[16] Eric Foner argues that the election of Lincoln "marked a turning point in the history of slavery in the United States" a fact that northerners and southerners alike recognized.[17] Mitchell Snay concurred, stressing that the Republican victory "triggered the final transformation from Southern sectionalism to Southern nationalism."[18] Evangelicals, like their secular counterparts, were swept alongside by the same political tide as were the nation's statesmen.[19]

One final point is crucial to understanding abolitionism and slavery, and more specifically, individuals like Francis Wayland who held antislavery views but who were not abolitionists. Robert Forbes argues that historians confuse *outcomes* with *beliefs*. The churches' failure to end the institution of slavery, may indicate less their acceptance of the institution, rather than their *inability* to end it. Forbes argues that clerical proslavery defenses were more defenses of Christianity, rather than slavery.[20] This ties in squarely with research by Mark Noll who argues that

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[15] David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 131 and 291.

[16] Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1978), 48 and 224.

[17] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 315-316.

[18] Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 151.

[19] See William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume. II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for the mounting crisis from the mid-1850s to the Civil War.

[20] Robert P. Forbes, "Slavery and the Evangelical Enlightenment," in John R McKivigan & Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 68-106; 75.

the literal hermeneutic then reliant on Scottish philosophy suggested that a denial of the scriptural compatibility of slavery was a denial of biblical authority itself. This restricted hermeneutic differed considerably from hermeneutical strategies utilized by Catholic, African-American, or certain Reformed groups. In short, to deny such a plain, literal reading of the Bible smacked of heresy.[21] Historians Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese in their *The Mind of the Master Class* suggest that the proslavery apologists, in appealing to scripture, got the better argument. Interestingly, however, European evangelical abolitionists found American proslavery apologetics amusing if less convincing.

Forbes further suggested that historians overplay the influence of moral suasion. Antislavery sentiments alone, no matter how ideologically pure, could not end such a deeply embedded economic and social institution. Many slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike feared the social fallout in ending slavery more than the ideological inconsistency with a nation "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" and a slaveholding republic. Coercion was necessary both for its continuation and to its eventual demise. Individuals like Wayland surmised it better to work within the existing system, to dismantle the institution through gradual, legal means, and above all, to maintain fellowship across the geographical divide tearing the nation apart. Whether better calculated or not, this was the choice most Americans took.

Furthermore, categorizing abolitionists is difficult to do, which reinforces my contention that tagging Wayland as "conservative" on slavery is meaningless. Historians have compartmentalized abolitionists into several camps. Divisions generally include proslavery, anti-slave system (distinguishing between slavery and the slave system as practiced in the United States), antislavery (slavery as sin, but not necessarily slave-holding), and abolitionists. Ronald Walters argues that such a division "tends to freeze abolitionists in a moment in time" and "obscures antislavery as process." He suggests that historians examine "starting points and ending points" and recognize that positions and ideas changed with time.[22] Wayland, like many antislavery individuals who resisted abolitionists, often ended up there by the start of the Civil War. Wayland then, should not be "frozen in time," but rather understood as a man

[21] Mark Noll, "The Bible and Slavery," in Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds, *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43-73.

[22] See Ronald G. Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," in Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 3-23.

betoken to the same forces of change as the majority of Americans of his day.

As stated in the opening, Francis Wayland was a leading proponent of the centrist vision in the struggle against slavery and that his life was a microcosm in the transition from moderate antislavery sentiment to full-brown Unionism and emancipation. Too often historians compartmentalize the history of slavery in American history, seeing only the twin poles of abolitionism or pro-slavery advocates. To be fair, both northern abolitionists and southern fire-eaters alike argued in these terms. However, the majority of northern and southerners in antebellum America were moderate on slavery. No simple dichotomy existed between an antislavery North and a proslavery South. Dissenters were present in both the North and South. Francis Wayland, though unique in that he was simultaneously sought after by northern abolitionists for support and yet respected in southern circles, reflected the transition of many northerners in shifting from moderate antislavery sentiment to active political support for emancipation.

In many respects, Wayland's moderate position mirrored Abraham Lincoln's antislavery position. The border states of Kentucky, Missouri, Delaware, and Maryland demanded a moderate approach to maintain their loyalty. Lincoln well understood the delicacy of the issues at stake and the need to move cautiously on slavery. Firmly antislavery, he chose containment over immediate abolitionism, and then supported emancipation as a war measure. Seen in this light, Wayland represented the position of most northern antislavery evangelicals who shied from direct activism. Just as Lincoln argued that the northerners would be powerless to affect slavery outside the Union, so Wayland argued that isolating the southern evangelical camp would do the same. Whatever influence northern evangelicals may have with their southern counterparts would be hopelessly lost if slavery became the only benchmark for fellowship.

To date, no historian has analyzed Wayland's life as a whole, or yet analyzed his moderate antislavery views as a microcosm of antebellum society as a whole. Seen through this prism, Wayland's "conservatism" on slavery was more mainstream than historians recognize. Furthermore, his "conservatism" appears less an appeasement position, than a calculated response to issues that offered no easy solutions. Certainly, the moderating Henry Clay was to be preferred over the extremist John C. Calhoun. Equally so, perhaps the moderating Wayland was preferable to the zero-sum game of the abolitionists.

This introduction should help establish the importance of the life of Francis Wayland in his relationship to the study of antebellum slavery. As a pastor, educational reformer, university president, economic, political, and philosophical writer, Wayland is significant in the broader context of nineteenth century American intellectual history. His *Elements of Moral Science* alone, as the leading textbook on moral philosophy in antebellum America, established his place as a significant intellectual figure. His antislavery views, while many may argue were typical of such writings, were in fact representative of antislavery moderates. What set Wayland apart were his biblical arguments against slavery, in contrast to two other notable evangelicals of similar stature, Charles Hodge of Princeton and Moses Stuart of Andover Seminary, who while antislavery in sentiment, argued that it had Biblical support. Wayland's position then, not only chastised southern slaveholding biblical arguments, but ran against the grain of many leading prominent northern scholars.

In summary, I seek to reestablish Wayland's place both in antebellum America and in American church history. For too long Wayland has lacked a systematic treatment of his life. Historians have only analyzed Wayland piecemeal, as an educational reformer, pastor, antislavery advocate, or writer of political economy and moral philosophy, but no one has analyzed his life a whole and contextualized it within the mainstream of antebellum intellectual life. The lone exception is James O. Murray's 1891 treatment in *Francis Wayland.* Taken as a whole, Wayland emerges as an intellectual of considerable weight, but long neglected in the pantheon of nineteenth century American intellectual leaders. In addition to this, no one has contextualized his antislavery views as representative of most northern antislavery opinion-makers. Even more specifically, his life is a microcosm of how antislavery moderates embraced immediate emancipationists as the political crisis of the 1850s became the Civil War of the 1860s.

# CHAPTER ONE

# THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD OF FRANCIS WAYLAND

Francis Wayland, a major figure in his own lifetime, has been lost in undeserved obscurity for the past century. Garnering little more than a cursory nod in textbooks of Antebellum America, Wayland has been the subject of little more than chapter length works on economics, educational philosophy, antebellum reformism, political monographs, and slavery debates. No full scale-scale biography of Wayland has emerged in more than one hundred years and his non-published, personal correspondence remains largely untranscribed. A prodigious writer and thinker, he wrote and lectured on nearly every conceivable subject while president at Brown University, from 1827-1855. Rarely do historians get such a complete glimpse of an individual's views on so wide a variety of topics. His scholarship provides a detailed look at his moral philosophy, economic theory, philosophical reasoning, theological viewpoints, political theorizing, and the social issues of his day. In addition to serving as a college president he pastored churches in Boston and Providence and thus his viewpoints were shaped and molded both inside and outside academia. His perspectives then are particularly valuable as he represented an antebellum thinker who worked from the vantage point of an intellectual academic and a hands-on practitioner.

It curious that Wayland devoted less space to slavery than to other subjects, though his antislavery writings are what sparked the greatest controversy. Both North and South of the Mason-Dixon, intellectuals constantly engaged his viewpoints on slavery. His popularization in both northern and southern circles extended beyond his antislavery writings, but his more politically charged writings exposed his position to counter-critiques. It is incumbent upon the historian to first understand his overall intellectual thought to better contextualize his antislavery sentiments. Only in understanding his larger intellectual framework can we properly position his antislavery critique. Wayland's intellectual views remained remarkably consistent over a fifty year period of writing, but we also

glimpse the limitations and self-imposed boundaries which often restrained his political activism. It is only in the working and labyrinth of his complex yet measured thinking that can we understand this.

Wayland's political thought established what he believed to be the proper boundaries of political activism and they help grasp his predisposition toward non-involvement in antislavery activism. Two key sources provide early insight into his viewpoints. His *The Duties of an American Citizen* (1825) is one of his earliest political statements and one of his best known. Delivered as a fast day sermon, its political nature departed from his usual theological sermonizing.[1] Divided into two parts, Wayland first analyzed European society and then its American context. Global revolutions, he argued, in commerce, trade, literacy, education, and Christian humanitarianism had swept through Christendom, producing a cross-cultural integration of classes and trading houses since the Reformation. A moral revolution followed on its heels and though it became contagious among the masses stubborn political rulers these changes. The relationship however changed as citizens demanded that sovereignty rested with them and they demanded that natural rights be respected. "A form of government to be stable," Wayland wrote, "must be adapted to the intellectual and moral condition of the governed; and when from any cause it has ceased to be so adapted, the time has come when it must inevitably be modified or subverted."[2]

Wayland distinguished between governments of will which he associated with state religion and governments of law associated with religious liberty. A government of will which divided society into the ruled and ruler, argued that law is nothing more than the will of the ruler, and demanded passive obedience by the people. In contrast, a government of law rested on opposite principles. "It supposes," Wayland wrote, "that there is but one class of society, and that this class is the people; that all

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[1] Fast Days had long been associated with New England culture. They were established for special days of remonstrance or blessings, generally characterized by church attendance, fasting, and abstinence from work. Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of a Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006), 48-51, 75-77, 85-87,133-34, 270-71, 372-73.

[2] Francis Wayland, *The Duties of An American Citizen: Two Discourses, Delivered in the First Baptist Meeting House in Boston, on Tuesday, April 7, 1825. The Day of Public Fast*, 2nd edition. (Boston: James Loring, Washington, 1825), 12; Wayland later expanded this theme of post-Reformation opportunity, albeit from less a political than a religious vantage-point; See his *Encouragements to Religious Efforts: A Sermon Delivered at the Request of the American Sunday School Union, May 25, 1830* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1830).

men are created equal, and therefore that civil institutions are voluntary associations, of which the sole object should be to promote the happiness of the whole." Furthermore, since the people chose their own form of government, they can "modify it at any subsequent time" they deem necessary. Power, being derived from the people, considered rulers a "purely delegated authority," bound at all times by a written code, itself an expression of the people's will. "It teaches," he continued, "that the ruler is nothing more than the intelligent organ of enlightened opinion, and declares that if he ceases to be so, he shall be a ruler no longer."[3] Moreover, a government of will is generally associated with state-sponsored religion, and trampled individual conscience and liberty of thought under the control of "ambitious statesmen and avaricious priests." In contrast, a government of law elevated the people above the ruler and subsequently religious tolerance and liberty above political or religious dogma.[4] Wayland defined oppression in both political and ecclesiastical terms. Political oppression was the hand-maiden of ecclesiastical oppression, and ecclesiastical oppression was the hand-maiden of political oppression. Wayland argued equally that civil liberty is the hand-maiden of religious liberty, as religious liberty is the hand-maiden of civil liberty. Progress does not move in isolated in circles but is rather interconnected and co-dependent upon another.

Wayland believed that the United States set the precedent for establishing a popular government of law anchored by religious tolerance. "It is teaching the world," Wayland explained, "that the easiest method of governing an intelligent people is, to allow them to govern themselves." Furthermore, it demonstrated "that a people can be virtuous without an established religion." Consistent with his thinking, Wayland did not argue that people can be virtuous without religion, but that virtue is best cultivated outside a formal establishment of religion. Coercion commands respect only as long as it exceeds popular resistance and promotes an unstable foundation for virtue since it does not proceed from genuine affections. However, Wayland cautioned that replacing a bad government with another is no guarantee of a better one."[5] In his sermon address *Encouragements to Religious Efforts* (1830) Wayland warned that healthy governments were ultimately predicated on the morality of its people and civil liberties were best protected through the general infusion of religious principles."[6]

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[3] Ibid., 12-13.
[4] Ibid., 20.
[5] Ibid., 25-27.
[6] Wayland, *Encouragement to Religious Efforts*, 27.

Wayland's lengthy and most original work, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* (1838) expanded his political philosophy. Wayland published this work because he felt that institutional philanthropic, reform and religious organizations exaggerated the moral accountability of reform work.[7] Wayland argued that society functioned best when the government machinery and its citizens were kept in their proper relationship. Power is always delegated "for a *particular* and *specified* purpose." Wayland explained: "One party is authorized to make laws, another to administer justice under them, and a third to put them into execution. Each party is responsible to society, for the discharge of precisely those duties which have been assigned to it." Political harmony, Wayland reasoned, worked best when each institution remained within its designated bounds."[8]

In his *Elements of Moral Science* (1835), Wayland distinguished between society and government by arguing that government provided the political framework in which society existed. Wayland defined government "to be that system of delegated agencies, by which these obligations of society to the individual are fulfilled," in which these powers were delegated *by* the people and obligated to work *for* the people.[9] Individual citizens reciprocated these responsibilities through paying taxes and respecting the "law of reciprocity" in which each citizen respected the rights of others. Naturally, these principles often failed and part of the blame, Wayland argued in his sermon *The Church: A Society For the Conversion of the World*, that the problem rested with unprincipled leaders in morally lax churches.[10] Yet, what if the government failed in its obligations and responsibilities and undermined basic civil liberties?

Wayland rejected the twin of courses of passive obedience, because citizens "have no right to obey an unrighteous law," yet rejected resistance by force as self-destructive. Rather, he advocated a third course of "suffering in the cause of right." "Here we act as we believe to be right," he explained, "in defiance of oppression, and bear patiently whatever an oppressor may inflict upon us." This course avoided both the moral temptation to obey unrighteous laws and avoided the self-destructive act of physical force and appealed to the "reason and conscience of men." It was also predicated on higher moral principles. "Passive obedience," he

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[7] Wayland and Wayland, *Memoirs*, I:389.

[8] Francis Wayland, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1838), 35; 149.

[9] Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1835; reprint 1857, 337; 351; these obligations are best spelled out in 356-360.

[10] Francis Wayland, "The Church A Society For the Conversion of the World," in *Sermons to the Churches* (New York, 1858), 99.

argued, "may arise from servile fear; resistance, from vain-glory, ambition, or desire of revolution. Suffering for the sake of right can only arise from a love of justice and a hatred of oppression."[11]

Wayland's political thought is further captured in *The Limits of Human Responsibility* (1838), *The Affairs of Rhode Island* (1842) and the *The Duty of Obedience to the Civil Magistrate* (1847). However, as these bear directly on later political questions and slavery, they will be analyzed in later chapters. His *Duties of an American Citizen*, however, established Wayland's core principle that a good government is inseparable from moral and intellectual cultivation. As will be readily argued throughout this chapter, this philosophy defined his *entire* social, political, economic, and religious thinking. Whatever his sphere of analysis, Wayland prescribed moral and intellectual improvement as the cure and its lack of cultivation as its curse. His thinking however, rather than being naively simplistic or reductionistic, assumed that fixed natural laws, established by the Creator underlay all spheres of inquiry in the same manner that natural laws governed the scientific realm.

Moral science texts of the mid-nineteenth century were voluminous, generally one-third of the text devoted to theoretical ethics and the remaining two-thirds devoted to practical ethics. Moral philosophy derived its ethic from God, but it could take multiple forms. William Paley, the renowned Scottish divine, grounded virtue in its utilitarian consequences and possible future rewards and punishments. Moral philosophers of the antebellum period shifted to an intuitive based-ethic, where actions were right or wrong in their essentialness rather than their utilitarianism. To be sure, virtuous behavior produced healthy consequences, just as poor behavior did unhealthy consequences. Moral philosophers of the nineteenth century did not divorce personal virtue from public virtue. No fine line existed between private and public character.

The ethical foundation laid down by these moral philosophers implied obligation, duty, necessity, responsibility, and moral accountability. Ethical duties were personalized, but had far-reaching public consequences. The good society was good or attainable only so much as man fulfilled his duty or obligation toward his fellow man. Virtue, character, and personal integrity, were the only safeguards against moral and political despotism. The course in moral philosophy was reserved for the senior year, usually taught by the college president. It was the binding theoretical glue that held all other subjects together. Since most college presidents prior to the Civil War were clergymen, these naturally were theologically oriented.

[11] Ibid., 361-366.

Ethics had social and political implications, and were useless if they existed only in the theoretical realm and much time was devoted to their external consequences in law, politics, religion, government, and economic theory.[12]

"Ethics, or Moral Philosophy, is the Science of Moral Law."[13] His idea of law is key to unlocking much of his intellectual thinking. Wayland grounded his moral theory in prefixed laws and sound moral conduct. Law, he wrote, "expresses an order of sequence between a specified action, and a particular mode of reward or of punishment." The "order of sequence" is simply the connection between the action and the result, a sort of chain reaction. Moral philosophy or law perceived within this "order of sequence" or "actions" a moral quality. "Moral Philosophy," as Wayland explained it, "takes it for granted that there is in human action a moral quality; that is, a human action may be either right or wrong." Furthermore, "A moral law is, therefore, a form of expression denoting an order of sequence established between the moral quality of actions, and their results."[14]

Yet from where do these laws derive or who determines the consequences of violating them? "Here it may be worthwhile to remark," Wayland explained, "that an order of sequence established, supposes, of necessity, an Establisher. Hence Moral Philosophy, as well as every other science, proceeds upon the supposition of the existence of a universal cause, the Creator of all things, who has made everything as it is, and who has subjected all things to the relations which they sustain." These laws, being fixed by God, are inviolable by man. "Such being the fact, it is

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[12] Two especially important works on moral science & moral improvement are: Wilson Smith, *Professors & Public Ethics: Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956); and Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). A recent work connecting the relationship between philosophy and slavery is Maurice S. Lee's, *Slavery, Philosophy and American Literature, 1830-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[13]Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science* ,23; this textbook sold ninety-five thousand copies by the late 1860s; see Francis Wayland and H.L. Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland*, 2 vols. (New York: Sheldon and Company 1867; reprint 1972), 385; John L. Dagg, President of Mercer University, noted in his own *Elements of Moral Science* (1859) that Wayland's work "has been justly esteemed as the best text-book extant on the subject," see John L. Dagg, *The Elements of Moral Science* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1860), iv.

[14] Ibid.,24.