

ABOLITIONISTS, POLITICAL ECONOMISTS, AND CAPITALISM

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The relationship between abolitionism and capitalism in the United States remains for historians a contentious subject. At the moment four general interpretations dominate. Neomarxists argue that abolitionism was the key movement that legitimated market social relations in the United States, in particular the supremacy of wage labor as the institutional means of fixing the economic position of manual labor. In this interpretation, the abolitionists wittingly or not paved the road for the conquest of industrial capitalism and oppression of the working class. Thomas Haskell offers a second approach, ideologically opposite the neomarxists, that found human sensitivity to others originating in market transactions: because individuals in a commercial economy learned to obey their promises when written down in legal contracts, they learned to deal with others without resorting to physical coercion, thereby inculcating a humanitarian sensibility. A third rendition emphasizes republicanism in abolitionist thought. Abolitionists were heirs of the American Revolution and republican thinking; their attack on slavery was based on denial of selfishness and an advocacy of public virtue. From this perspective, the abolitionists were anticapitalists because they denied the role of self-interest that lay at the core of capitalist thought and behavior. Finally, the evangelical interpretation insists that the abolitionists were Christian zealots and moralists, opposed to capitalism either because morality superseded the economic process or because they would not place the worship of mammon above worship of the deity.¹

James L. Huston has recently published "Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History*, 65 (May 1999), 249-86.

¹ For the emphasis upon abolitionists' role in legitimizing wage labor in capitalism, see John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: Vol. I: Commerce and Compromise, 1820-1850* (New York, 1995), 82-84, 131-81; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, 1975), 45-47; and Davis, "Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony," *American Historical Review*, 92 (Oct. 1987), 797-812. For Thomas Haskell, see Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," parts 1 and 2, *American Historical Review*, 90 (Apr. 1985), 339-61

The main contenders at the present seem to be the neomarxist and evangelical renditions. In 1998 the publication of two important works showed how vividly these two interpretations clashed. Amy Dru Stanley insisted that abolitionists trumpeted the key doctrines of liberal capitalist doctrine: self-ownership, voluntary economic arrangements, social relations governed by contract, and the correctness of wage labor. "Legitimizing wage labor was a central part of the abolitionist project, but never its sum total," she argued; "for most abolitionists, the autonomy expressed in wage labor was but an offshoot of the underlying right of property in the self that constituted the taproot of contract freedom." At the same time, the late Paul Goodman portrayed abolitionism as a reaction against capitalism (or the market transformation). "Abolition," he wrote, "was a struggle to impose on social and economic relations the moral principles that were rooted in Christian teachings."²

This article seeks to refine historical understanding of the ties between abolitionism to the emerging capitalism of the United States in the nineteenth century and generally sides with Goodman's perspective. Abolitionists possessed a biblical political economy, not a classical liberal one. The source of confusion in understanding abolitionist economic thinking vis-à-vis capitalist economics stems from two conditions. First, both capitalist (classical) economics and abolitionist thought stressed the principle of voluntary action—or, in terms that I employ, a principle of noncoercion. Both insisted it was wrong (abolitionist) or inefficient (political economist) to force economic actors into decisions that they would not make of their own volition. This common ground produced a host of similarities between capitalist economics and abolitionist ideals that easily could be interpreted as identical. Their commitment to noncoercion in economic life pushed abolitionists and political economists to advocate similar institutions and policies. But an enormous gap between them appeared when it came to explaining the reasons behind their commitments. For the political economists, economic activity should be ruled by (lawful) self-interest guided by the market mechanism (that

and (June 1985), 547-66. For a treatment of abolitionism utilizing the republican synthesis, see Daniel J. McInerney, *The Fortunate Heirs of Freedom: Abolition and Republican Thought* (Lincoln, 1994). On the abolitionists and religion, consult John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca, 1984); also, James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York, 1976; 2d ed., 1996). A recent synthesis of work on reformers has reduced the stress on modernization that filled earlier works: Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore, 1995), xiv-xx, 9-10.

² Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York, 1998), 20; see also 105, 160; Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley, 1998), xiv, 140.

is, supply and demand); for the abolitionists, economic activity should be guided by biblical strictures on how humans should relate to one another—not by self-interested market mechanisms. Biblical morality and market mechanics often clashed, and for this reason abolitionists often denounced the outcomes of the free market. Therefore, although abolitionists and capitalist theorists advocated an economics of “freedom,” the notion of morality separated them dramatically.

A revealing way of understanding the economic ideas of the abolitionists is to compare them with the doctrines of political economists. Political economists promoted the view of classical liberalism (a preference for free market social relations) with more reason, precision, and enthusiasm than any other group. Well before the abolitionist crusade, these writers had developed and justified free market theory. Their pronouncements thus provide an important standard to gauge the capitalist content of abolitionist exhortations.

Classical economists used a principle of noncoercion to establish general economic laws. The absence of physical force essentially defines noncoercion, and it implies that people’s activity should arise from individual volition or voluntary association.³ Noncoercion in classical economic thought (in the United States, free trade theory) probably arose out of the explosion of commercial activity throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although many American revolutionaries warned that commerce fostered luxury and corruption, a significant number held a contrary view that commerce cooled the passions for war and conquest.⁴ Uniting commerce and

³ I am not here going to detail the noncoercive ideal beyond the brief description in the narrative. It is my belief that much of nineteenth-century American history exhibits a pursuit of the noncoercive ideal, in politics as well as in economic thought and religion, and then the ideal became repudiated at the beginning of the twentieth century. A comment needs to be made about why I just do not use the phrase “voluntary action.” Noncoercion implies the absence of physical force (violence) upon a person; but it does not imply how action should be taken. In a colloquial sense, it merely means no bullying. While voluntary action is a logical inference from noncoercion, it implies activity. But many could be drawn to a noncoercive ideal not only because they wanted to act (entrepreneurs) but also because they wanted stasis and to be left alone (artisans and subsistence farmers). Noncoercion in popular terms had the capacity of casting a wide net over the nation’s social classes.

⁴ For example, Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, Apr. 30, 1764, in Leonard W. Labaree and William B. Willcox, eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (35 vols., New Haven, 1959-90), XI, 182; Ezra Stiles, *United States Elevated to Glory and Honor . . .* (New Haven, 1783), 30; Noah Webster, Jr., *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects* (Boston, 1790), 327; A Farmer [George Logan], *Five Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States . . .* (Philadelphia, 1792), 14; James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York, 1987), 106, 111, 116. A large literature exists on the relation between commerce and American republicanism. For a few examples, see J. G. A. Pocock, “Virtue and Commerce in

noncoercion was the mechanism of exchange. To be sure, rules had to be applied to marketplaces and means of enforcement established, but the essence of trade was mutual agreement between parties—and no use of force.⁵

Adam Smith promoted (albeit indirectly) the noncoercive ideal in economic thought. He intended to show the means by which nations increased their wealth, and he outlined the essentials of capitalist theory—marketplace performance, the factors of production, the division of labor, the negative role of the state, the augmentation of capital stock, and unobstructed international trade. Smith's work was remarkable for his frank avowal of the social utility of self-interest and his skepticism about benevolence or virtue.⁶ But the key to Smith's proposals for optimizing national wealth was the principle of noncoercion in economic affairs.

Smith assumed for analysis that each person knew his own self-interest: "[e]very individual, it is evident, can, in his local situation, judge much better than any statesman or lawgiver can do for him." Upon this assumption, which established the primacy of individualism, Smith erected the claim that economic progress and satisfaction more surely resulted from individual choice than from the commands of political or ecclesiastic authorities who often misdirected resources. Smith then proceeded to knock down every institution that stood between an individual and his capacity for economic action. He denounced guilds, employer associations, government regulations, obstacles to overseas trade, corporate privileges, government taxation, governmental agencies, and trade associations.⁷ Except for defense and

the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (Summer 1972), 119-34; Ralph Lerner, "Commerce and Character: The Anglo-American as New-Model Man," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (Jan., 1984), 3-6; Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 69-80.

⁵ [Benjamin Franklin], "Argument for Making the Bills of Credit Bear Interest [1764]," in Labaree and Willcox, eds., *Papers of Franklin*, XI, 12; Pelatiah Webster, *An Essay on Free Trade and Finance, humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Public* (Philadelphia, 1779), 5.

⁶ Glenn R. Morrow, *The Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith* (1923; rep., New York, 1969), 8, 64-65, 76-82; Jacob Viner, *The Long View and the Short: Studies in Economic Theory and Policy* (Glencoe, IL, 1958), 216-27; Duncan Forbes, "Skeptical Whiggism, Commerce, and Liberty," in Andrew S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson, eds., *Essays on Adam Smith*, (Oxford, UK, 1975), 182-85. See the alternative view of Smith in J. Cropsey, "Adam Smith and Political Philosophy," *ibid.*, 146-49; Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics: Essays in Historiographic Revision* (New York, 1978), chap. 4.

⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (1776; rep., New York, 1937), 420-35; see also 60-65, 118-35, 249-50.

certain essential features of civilization, Smith disparaged every agency that could coerce an individual's economic behavior.⁸

Smith's formulations sustained one materialist conclusion: nations unencumbered by monopolies, trade associations, guilds, and government regulations gained wealth much faster than those nations that were so encumbered. Free markets produced higher standards of living that kept rising through the further division of labor and capital accumulation. Smith never said that the market was the most "efficient" allocator of resources that made this growth possible—that was a twentieth-century phrase; but his analysis pointed to that conclusion. It was individual freedom of action guided by voluntary action—not by political or private coercion—that augmented a nation's wealth. Thus out of early political economy came the crucial understanding that economic growth was related to individual freedom whereas economic stagnation followed governmental policies of coercion, long associated with privilege, monopoly, trade restrictions, and excessive governmental size.⁹

Capitalist economic theorists would take nearly a century to understand their foundations in noncoercion, but a number of writers in the nineteenth century did pick up the ideas of voluntarism and economic relations governed

⁸ It is well known that Smith, like his friend David Hume, found the savagery and violence of ancient civilizations repugnant. As well, Smith believed the aristocracy had failed to exhibit "virtue," and that rule by the best had been a practical failure. Smith's economic theory stripped aristocrats of their power so they could not act on their faulty passions, and he in turn elevated the small desires of small people. Perhaps he thought that under the condition of noncoercion in a market setting, the small desires of self-interest could not harm societies the way the passions of great men did; indeed, by constraining those small desires by the market apparatus, a social benefit was produced. For Smith's views on aristocracy, competition, the market, and ancient civilizations, see Duncan Forbes, "Skeptical Whiggism, Commerce and Liberty," 184, 187-89, 196, 199; Robert E. Shalhope, "Individualism in the Early Republic," in Richard O. Curry and Lawrence B. Goodheart, eds., *American Chameleon: Individualism in Trans-National Context*, (Kent, OH, 1991), 78; Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics*, 58-60, 84, 97, 101, 104-106; Athol Fitzgibbons, *Adam Smith's System of Liberty, Wealth, and Virtue: The Moral and Political Foundations of "The Wealth of Nations"* (New York, 1995), 45-57, 59, 89, 137-47.

⁹ See Mark Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect* (4th ed., New York, 1985), 53-63; Vincent Bladen, *From Adam Smith to Maynard Keynes: The Heritage of Political Economy* (Toronto, 1974), 14, 38-40; Joyce O. Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York, 1984), 90-92; Shalhope, "Individualism in the Early Republic," 79-84; G. B. Richardson, "Adam Smith on Competition and Increasing Returns," in Skinner and Wilson, eds., *Essays on Adam Smith*, 357-58.

by mutual consent.¹⁰ The American protectionist, Henry C. Carey, believed that “the habit of voluntary association is the essential characteristic of self-government.”¹¹ Economists such as George Tucker indicated the role of voluntarism in economic activity by asserting that a person had an “unrestricted right to buy where he can obtain the cheapest and best articles.” This was the right to dispose of property freely without government interference so long as the property was obtained in accordance with the rules of the community.¹² The exchange of property for property ought to yield “mutual advantage [for both] of the parties.”¹³ Under conditions of fairness, exchange would “distribute the value of a product equally among its various producers, leaving neither to any of them, nor to the consumer, any just ground of complaint.” To explain injustice in the economic realm, economists, following Adam Smith, placed the blame upon government’s coercive powers—the granting of monopoly privileges or other forms of favoritism. Thomas Jefferson reflected this analysis in 1785 while serving as ambassador to France. Denouncing French tariffs and restrictions on trade, Jefferson mused, “A free competition between buyers and sellers, is the most certain means of fixing the true worth of merchandize;” but monopolies and exclusive

¹⁰ The subject will not be pursued here, but it should be noted that the noncoercive theme was somewhat disguised in the nineteenth century because of the prevailing belief that government had to “coerce” workers into accepting their miserable fate. In the twentieth century, however, noncoercion and the role of voluntary choice has become the “moral” justification of capitalist economics—the use of force is forbidden. The assumption of freedom is imbedded in marginal utility analysis in the preference functions. See, for example, Edward E. Zajac, *Political Economy of Fairness* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); Milton Friedman, with the assistance of Rose D. Friedman, *Capitalism & Freedom* (Chicago, 1962), 2-21; Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York, 1974), chaps. 1-3; Benjamin Ward, *The Ideal Worlds of Economics* (New York, 1979), 22-27; Peter D. McClelland, *The American Search for Economic Justice* (New York, 1990), 108, 241-46.

¹¹ Henry C. Carey, *The Past, The Present & the Future* (1847; rep., New York, 1967), 147 (quotation on 227); Henry C. Carey, *The Principles of Social Science* (1859; 3 vols., Philadelphia, 1867), I, 63; Alonzo Potter, *Political Economy: Its Objects, Uses, and Principles*. . . (New York, 1841), 84; Daniel Raymond, *The Elements of Political Economy* (2d ed.; 2 vols., 1823; rep., New York, 1964), I, 10-28 (quotation on 28).

¹² George Tucker, *Political Economy for the People* (Philadelphia, 1859), 118. This sentiment abounds, for example, in Francis Lieber, *Essays on Property and Labour as Connected with Natural Law and the Constitution of Society* (New York, 1841), 48; David A. Wells, *The Creed of Free Trade* (Np, nd [Boston, 1875]), 4; Pelatiah Webster, *Essay on Free Trade*, 5. There was a considerable tradition that warned against unrestrained competition, but that subject will not be pursued here.

¹³ Quote from A Farmer [George Logan], *Five Letters Addressed to the Yeomany of the United States* . . . (Philadelphia, 1792), 10.

privileges have "been found in experience the most powerful engine ever employed for the suffocation of commerce."¹⁴

By the early nineteenth century economists had forged a framework to understand economic phenomena, and their analysis almost always boiled down to an understanding of supply and demand. Indeed, the very presence of a particular analytical vocabulary signaled the emergence of capitalist economic thought: supply, demand, cost of production, competition, rent, land supply, population growth, monopoly, factors of production, natural and nominal prices, determination of value, natural advantage, productive and unproductive labor.

Economic analysis of labor proved crucial to the debate over slavery. According to classical economics, the laborer was fated to live in squalid poverty. The doctrines of rent and population promulgated by David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus first held captive economic theorizing about laborers. From their writings arose the "iron law of wages" that stipulated misery for the masses (or at best, a "customary" subsistence), wealth for the landlords, and no progress for capitalists.¹⁵ Not everyone was happy with these predictions, however, and in the United States protectionists in particular railed against what they hoped was the fallacious thinking of British classical economists.¹⁶ Nonetheless, to understand labor nearly all economists employed a single analysis: labor was a commodity, and like all commodities supply and demand determined its price. The price of labor was defined to be the wage rate. In one fashion or another, those steeped in political economy would write

¹⁴ American Commissioners to De Thulemeier, Mar. 14, 1785, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, et al. (2 vols. to date, Princeton, 1950-), VIII, 27-28. On the warping influence of government according to free traders, see James L. Huston, *Securing the Fruits of Labor: The American Concept of Wealth Distribution, 1765-1900* (Baton Rouge, 1998), 162-70.

¹⁵ Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers* (3d ed., New York, 1967), 80-95; Mark Blaug, among many, argue that Ricardo's subsistence wage theory was not true subsistence; Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, chaps. 3, 4, and 117, 184-88.

¹⁶ For the British, demand for labor was determined by the amount of capital that sustained the wages fund, and supply was determined by population growth. John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy*, ed. W. J. Ashley (1871; London, 1926), 343-45, 351-62, 379, 688-93; Nassau William Senior, *An Outline of the Science of Political Economy* (1836; rep., New York, 1939), 174-75, 198-99; J. R. McCulloch, *A Treatise on the Circumstances Which Determine the Rate of Wages and the Condition of the Labouring Classes, Including an Inquiry into the Influence of Combinations* (2d ed., 1854; rep., New York, 1963), 28. Adam Smith originally believed wages would rise; Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 74-81. Other economists, especially the American protectionists, disagreed; see James L. Huston, "A Political Response to Industrialism: The Republican Embrace of Protectionist Labor Doctrines," *Journal of American History*, 70 (Oct. 1983), 35-57.

something akin to David Ricardo's pronouncement on wage determination: "Labour, like all other things which are purchased and sold, and which may be increased or diminished in quantity, has its natural and its market price. The natural price of labour is that price which is necessary to enable the labourers, one with another, to subsist and perpetuate their race, without either increase or diminution."¹⁷

The centrality of wage determination to the question of the relationship between capitalism and abolitionism receives its vitality from the frequent comparison made between free and slave labor. According to the neomarket interpretation, the capitalist social relation most requiring justification was remunerating labor with wages, because industrial workers constituted a new, dependent class that had not existed before. Wage labor had two aspects that had cast suspicion upon the social beneficence of freedom for the worker. First, free (or wage) labor seemed to be another dependent condition, in which an inferior took orders from a superior. Second, dependency produced mere subsistence wages because the employer out of self-interest reduced wages to the lowest level that could sustain life. Therefore, wage labor resembled slavery in terms of remuneration but possessed none of the guarantees of food, shelter, and clothing that slaves were given. Classical economists found a way to justify subsistence wages by removing the personal greed of the employer and substituting for it a mechanism that was supposedly natural, objective, and fair in meting out rewards that matched productive contributions. That mechanism, of course, was the market.¹⁸

As the United States between 1820 and 1860 lurched towards a market economy and industrialization, someone had to justify the rise of masses of

¹⁷ David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy, and Taxation* (3d ed., London, UK, 1821), 93; *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, Piero Sraffa, ed. (11 vols., Cambridge, UK, 1951-73), I, 93.

¹⁸ The literature varies on the definition of "capitalism" and what constitutes the basic feature of capitalism. I am following the argument of Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics*, 82-85. However, the reader should be aware of other means of definition. One is a ceaseless urge to accumulate (investment), which was the feature settled upon by Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958), 17; see also Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, 22-23. Another is the commodification of human relationships; Susan Brown, *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism and Anarchism* (Montreal, CAN, 1993), 3-4. For a discussion over these problems, see Shearer Bowman Davis, *Masters and Lords: Mid-19th-Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers* (New York, 1993), 79-111; Christopher Clark, "Rural America and the Transition to Capitalism," in Paul A. Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic*, (Madison, 1997), 66; Paul A. Gilje, "The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic," *ibid.*, 1-2; Gordon S. Wood, "The Enemy Is Us: Democratic Capitalism in the Early Republic," *ibid.*, 137-38.

workers at subsistence wages by explaining the moral righteousness of capitalism. For the neomarxists, the abolitionists became that group.¹⁹ This interpretation has made the wage question crucial to establishing the relationship between abolitionism and capitalism. Noncoercion, market forces, and the wage rate figured prominently in many analyses of slavery that contemporary economists offered, and their musings on the subject provide an instructive comparison to the views of abolitionists. Adam Smith did not delve into slavery at any length, but his sparse comments on slavery encapsulated the most prevalent attitude of economists: the work of “freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves.” Slave labor, because coerced, was not applied in the most advantageous fashion or endeavor; furthermore overseers were careless. Smith also noted that there seemed to be a correlation between slavery and a lack of improvements. For Smith, slavery contained an abiding economic delusion. Masters of capital and force desired slavery because the maintenance of slaves seemed so small, but Smith hoped to show that the cheapness of subsistence was more than offset by lackluster work effort and diminution of output.²⁰

When American (not necessarily British) political economists analyzed slavery, their conclusion boiled down almost to one word: incentive.²¹ To obtain efficient, productive labor, adequate rewards had to be meted out, but in slavery the worker was deprived of the “fruits of his labor.” Economists based their explanations for the role of incentive on the influence of physical force—coercion. New England economist Samuel Newman in 1835 affirmed that “the slave, being compelled to work for the benefit of another, and in that

¹⁹ It should be noted, of course, that one did not need abolitionists to reify wage labor: political economists and their partners, politicians, had been accomplishing that feat long before abolitionism ever emerged. Why neomarxists have chosen abolitionists instead of political economists, politicians, or other groups has an explanation that will only briefly be described here. The fascination derives from the theory itself, because in theory a new set of production relations requires someone to “valorize” or legitimate the social relations that result; as the abolitionists screamed moral principles, they are the obvious group to pin legitimation upon. Moreover, the theory also stipulates that only the proletariat (and proletarian ideas) seek true freedom; other reformers are too enmeshed in the system of production to note the deficiencies of new systems of production, and they always accept the oppression of some social group.

²⁰ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 81, 365. Except for John Stuart Mill at mid-century, to be treated later, British political economists largely deserted the economic investigation of slavery after the American Revolution.

²¹ An older tradition condemned slavery for political reasons, for the aristocracy it reared, for a distaste for manual labor among whites, and for restraining population growth. Benjamin Franklin, “Observations on the Increase of Mankind,” [1755], in Labaree and Willcox, eds., *Writings of Ben Franklin*, IV, 230-31; Daniel Raymond, *Elements of Political Economy*, II, 358-65.

way which another prescribes, has no fondness for his employment, and no motive to exertion." That was the reason why a New England farmer worked twice as hard as a slave: the personal freedom (noncoercion) of the New Englander ensured a reward for effort. Free trader George Opdyke of New York City proposed that the unproductiveness in slavery arose from the separation of mental and physical labor—master and slave—thus denying the fruitful conjunction of the two working together. For others, slavery dried up the supply of capital for other activity and reduced aggregate demand for products.²²

George Tucker and Thomas Cooper, two southern political economists, essentially agreed with the northern analysis. Tucker, a professor at the University of Virginia, admitted that slavery degraded manual labor and that only a "resort to punishment" could make slaves work. Cooper, a firebrand economist in South Carolina in the 1820s, conceded that being "all forced," slave labor was "undoubtedly the dearest kind of labour." But both southerners added an ethnocentric condition: the race explained the economy of slavery. "Nothing will justify slave labour in point of economy," wrote Cooper, "but the nature of the soil and climate which incapacitates a white man from labouring in the summer time."²³

John Stuart Mill dealt with American slavery at some length, and his meanderings supply an informative comparison to that of the Americans. Mill called slavery a system in which the master took all of labor's compensation, in which the pecuniary interest of the master depended on "the facilities for importing fresh slaves." If an ample supply existed, slaves were cheap and could be worked to death. So long as a nation had underpopulation, the returns on slaveholding were sufficient to justify the system.²⁴ Like the

²² Samuel P. Newman, *Elements of Political Economy* (Andover, MA, 1835), 52 (quotation on 53); George Opdyke, *A Treatise on Political Economy* (New York, 1851), 329-33 (quotation on 330). See also Henry C. Carey, *Principles of Political Economy* (4 vols., 1837-1840; rep., New York, 1965), III, 196-204; Carey, *Past, Present, and Future*, 359-66. See also John Bascom, *Political Economy: Designed as a Text-Book for Colleges* (1859; Andover, 1874), 60; "The Applications of Political Economy," *New Englander*, 7 (Aug. 1849), 437.

²³ Tucker, *Political Economy for the People*, 83-88 (quotation on 83); Thomas Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy* (Columbia, SC, 1826), 94-96 (quotation on 94, 95; see also Robert Colin McLean, *George Tucker: Moral Philosopher and Man of Letters* (Chapel Hill, 1961), 193-202. Noncoercion in economic liberalism, at least in its most optimistic form, found slavery guilty of sluggish economic activity because the worker was deprived of rewards. In its pessimistic form, when free labor wages were subsistence wages, economic liberalism found slavery guilty by burdening the capitalist with obligations to workers when the most efficient activity was to engage in other pursuits with different workers; this critique of slavery while not unknown in the United States was uncommon.

²⁴ Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, 249-51.

Americans, Mill found that “labour extorted by fear of punishment” was “inefficient and unproductive.” Thus slavery deadened the intellect, hindered the search for improvements, and lowered worker productivity. Crucial in his discussion was a comparison between free and slave labor: “whether slavery or free labour is most profitable to the employer, depends on the wages of the free labourer.” And here Mill pulled in the Malthusian doctrine of population growth that ultimately, in British political economy, drove wages to the subsistence level. Free labor was more efficient so long as it obtained a higher wage but only during an early stage of civilization. High wages could not last indefinitely because the supply of labor grew naturally and drove workers’ remuneration down to subsistence levels.²⁵ Eventually free labor became cheaper than slave labor—that is, the laborer was materially worse off in freedom than in slavery.

Abolitionists disagreed significantly with political economists, and in their assault on slavery they enunciated themes such as republicanism, American exceptionalism, political liberalism, and Old Testament fundamentalism. Abolitionists also gave voice to a variety of economic precepts. Because a New Testament doctrine of noncoercion was the touchstone for abolitionists, striking similarities between them and classical economists surfaced. However, those striking similarities have to be paired with some striking criticisms of market relations. By combining the similarities with the criticisms, one arrives at the conclusion that abolitionists espoused a biblical political economy that differed in important ways from economic liberalism. The principle of noncoercion permitted the abolitionists and the political economists to travel parallel paths that often seemed to merge, but those paths indeed were separate.

Abolitionism appealed to a large diversity of individuals who had no central organization or common platform. Knots of abolitionists existed in the country: the Garrisonian clique around Boston, the evangelical brood led by Arthur and Lewis Tappan in New York City, the anti-institutionalists headed by Gerrit Smith in western New York, western revivalists who followed the example of Theodore Dwight Weld, evangelical “come-outers” who stayed

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 251, 253. Harriet Martineau was more like the Americans in terms of remuneration than Mill; and she furthermore stressed the violence of slavery, as had David Hume decades earlier. Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (3 vols., 1837; rep., New York, 1966), II, 307, 320-29; David Hume, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” in Eugene Rotwein, ed., *David Hume: Writings on Economics* (Madison, 1955), 112-143; see also Jean Baptiste Say, *A Treatise on Political Economy, or the Production, Distribution and Consumption of Wealth* (1821; 1880; rep. New York, 1964), 130; J. R. McCulloch, *The Principles of Political Economy: With a Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Science* (Edinburgh, 1825), 10.

within churches, and political abolitionists such as Gamaliel Bailey and James G. Birney. All people could be called abolitionists who attacked slavery on moral grounds, based their appeal on justice to the enslaved Africans, fought to some degree the intense racism of the time, and insisted on immediate steps to begin the dismantling of slavery. In this sense most Liberty Party members deserve the appellation "abolitionist," but most Free Soilers do not, and in general I will follow the conventions of writers on abolitionism as to who belonged to the abolitionist camp and who was merely antislavery.²⁶ Further, abolitionists tended to be evangelical Christian radicals who willingly pushed Christian doctrines to their limits and refused to exclude anyone because of gender or race. Abolitionists rejected the reservations and exceptions found in mainstream Christian groups.

To ferret out abolitionist economic doctrines, one must wade through their attacks on slavery. Simply put, slavery absorbed the energy and the thinking of abolitionists; their thoughts were almost always linked to a denunciation of the peculiar institution. They were not like political economists, who built up arguments in a logical manner, moving from general propositions to specific ones. To discover abolitionists' economic thinking, we must first answer the question: Why did they consider slavery immoral? The answer took form and revolved around a common set of biblical doctrines; these doctrines in turn formed the basis of their economic analysis. Moreover, the abolitionist biblical indictment of slavery—and thus their economic understanding—remained surprisingly unchanged over time. The level of vituperation and the metaphors that the abolitionists used did change. The steam engine, the locomotive, the cotton mill, the outcomes of government policies, the implications of census statistics all could be injected into the argument as they became available in historical time. But the moral postulates against slavery underwent no alteration at all. Individuals changed the order of the doctrines and emphasized certain elements over others, but the general argument, entirely in place by the 1760s, persisted for over one hundred years. And through it all, it must be underlined, national wealth was not a guiding principle of the abolitionist attack.

Abolitionists relied upon six key biblical passages to condemn slavery. The Golden Rule was probably the single most quoted biblical statement in the abolitionist lexicon: "*To do to others what we would have others do to us*"—a command that was explicitly linked to the ideal of a noncoercive, Christian

²⁶ James L. Huston, "The Experiential Basis of the Northern Antislavery Impulse," *Journal of Southern History*, 56 (Nov. 1990), 609-40.

society.²⁷ Theodore Parker made a telling use of it: if slavery were just, then individuals living in the present would feel free to make a slave of Jesus because that would be fair treatment.²⁸ A second doctrine, appearing extensively in discussions of labor relations, claimed that the laborer was worthy of his hire; St. Paul enjoined employers to give to servants that which was just.²⁹ In America, abolitionists insisted African slaves did not receive rewards commensurate with their labor. The third biblical reference was to the decalogue, the ten commandments, of which the most important in this context was "thou shalt not steal." Abolitionists used the prohibition of theft to denounce the African slave trade, insisting that individuals "owned"

²⁷ Quote from "An Exhortion & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes," in Clement A. Price, ed., *Freedom Not Far Distant: A Documentary History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey* (Newark, 1980), 10; see Randolph A. Roth, "The First Radical Abolitionists: The Reverend James Milligan and the Reformed Presbyterians of Vermont," *New England Quarterly*, 55 (Dec. 1982), 557-59; Edward O. Schriver, *Go Free: The Antislavery Impulse in Maine, 1833-1855* (Orono, ME, 1970), 16-25; John Woolman, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity, of every "Denomination." Part Second* (Philadelphia, 1762), 3-17; *Constitution of the Maryland Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of Free Negroes, and Others, Unlawfully Held in Bondage* (Baltimore, 1789), preamble, 3; "The Question: Are You Ready for the Question," *New Englander*, 8 (May 1850), 294-95; Nathaniel Hall, *The Iniquity: Sermon Preached in the First Church, Dorchester, on Sunday, Dec. 11, 1859* (Boston, 1859), 8-9; Granville Sharp, *An Essay On Slavery, Proving from Scripture its Inconsistency with Humanity and Religion . . .* (Burlington, NJ, 1773), 20, 22.

²⁸ Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on Slavery," [1841], in ed. Francis Power Cobbe, et al., *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker* (12 vol., London, UK, 1864-1871), V, 3-5; "Constitution of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery," 1774, in *American Museum*, 6 (May 1787), 460; Jonathan Edwards, *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade; and of the Slavery of the Africans . . .* (New Haven, 1791), 3; [David Cooper], *A Mite Case into the Treasury: Or, Observations on Slave-Keeping* (Philadelphia, 1772), 7, 13; Price, ed., *Freedom Not Far Distant*, 10, 22; (Jonesboro, TN) *The Emancipator*, 7th Month, 31, 1820, 53, 56; Anthony Benezet, *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes . . .* (Germantown, PA, 1759), 3; [Nathaniel Appleton], *Considerations on Slavery In a Letter to a Friend* (Boston, 1767), 12; [David Rice], *Slavery Inconsistent with Justice and Good Policy* (Lexington, 1792), 35; George Fitzhugh and A. Hogeboom, *A Controversy On Slavery . . .* (Oneida, NY, 1857), 21.

²⁹ Abraham Pryne in William G. Brownlow and Pryne, *Ought Slavery to be Perpetuated? A Debate between Rev. W. G. Brownlow and Rev. A. Pryne. Held at Philadelphia, September, 1858* (Philadelphia, 1858), 117; William Jay, "Inquiry Into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies," [1834] in Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery* (1853; rep., New York, 1968), 138; George B. Cheever, *God Against Slavery: And the Freedom and Duty of the Pulpit To Rebuke It, As a Sin Against God* ([1857], rep., Cincinnati, n.d.), 94-94; [Theodore Weld], *The Bible Against Slavery; or, An Inquiry into the Genius of the Mosaic System, and the Teachings of the Old Testament on the Subject of Human Rights* (1864; rep., Detroit, 1970), 21, 71.

themselves and the system of slavery stole the fruits of the slave's labor.³⁰ A fourth vital scriptural passage giving moral guidance came from Genesis. God created humans in his image and gave them mastery over the beasts of the world. Further, in the New Testament, God also offered salvation to humans through Jesus, thereby giving to humans a quality of potential divinity. To deprive individuals of their divine aspect—to deny them their humanity—constituted a defiance of God.³¹ Fifth—and common throughout the country—was the Old Testament injunction that “by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread,” a pronouncement that abolitionists and others could interpret as an order for each person to labor for subsistence. Slavery allowed some people (slaveholders) to live off the labors of others, and abolitionists simply ruled out of order a life of lesiure.³² Finally, abolitionists emphasized racial equality, drawing from the passage, “God hath made of one blood all nations of men.” Slavery treated Africans as inferiors.³³ Of these biblical commandments, the ones having most relevance to economic thought are the

³⁰ Pryne in Brownlow and Pryne, *Ought Slavery to be Perpetuated*, 115; Cheever, *God Against Slavery*, 123-24; Cheever sermon in *New York Tribune*, Apr. 23, 1860, 6; Elizur Wright, Jr., *The Sin of Slavery, and Its Remedy: Containing Some Reflections on the Moral Influence of African Colonization* (New York, 1833), 5, 8-9; [Cooper], *A Mite Cast into the Treasury*, 5-7, 13-14; John Gregg Fee, *An Anti-Slavery Manual* (1848; rep., New York, 1969), 140-41, and chap. 5 generally.

³¹ *Liberator*, July 29, 1859; “Declaration of Principles,” William Lloyd Garrison, quoted in Parker Pillsbury, *Acts of Anti-Slavery Apostles* (Concord, NH, 1883), 16; Henry B. Stanton, *Remarks of Henry B. Stanton, in the Representatives' Hall, on the 23d and 24th of February, 1837 . . . on the Subject of Slavery* (5th ed., Boston, 1837), 21; E. R. Tyler, *Slaveholding a Malum in Se, or Invariable Sinful* (2d ed., Hartford, 1839), 4-5, 22; Rev. J[onathan]. Blanchard, *Sermon on Slave-Holding: Preached by Appointment, before the Synod of Cincinnati, at Their Late Stated Meeting at Mount Pleasant, Ohio, October 20th, 1841* (Cincinnati, 1842), 4; William L. Garrison to William Goodell, Feb. 26, 1836, in Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life* (4 vols., New York, 1885-1889), II, 94; [Appleton], *Considerations on Slavery*, 4; Lysander Spooner, *The Unconstitutionality of Slavery* (1860; rep., New York, [1965]), 5-8; Zephaniah Swift, *An Oration on Domestic Slavery* (Hartford, 1791), 3-4. Most of the sources make some reference to natural rights. Lawrence B. Goodheart, *Abolitionist, Actuary, Atheist: Elizur Wright and the Reform Impulse* (Kent, OH, 1990), 93; Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore, 1976), 129.

³² For example, Fee, *Anti-Slavery Manual*, 140; “A Pennsylvanian” [Benjamin Rush], *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America Upon Slave-Keeping* (Philadelphia, 1773), 7; William E. Channing, *Slavery* (4th ed., Boston, 1836), 72.

³³ G. W. C. in (Hallowell, ME) *Liberty Standard*, Jan. 6, 1848; this is also the central theme developed in Goodman, *Of One Blood*, xv-xx, chap. 17. There may be other biblical passages crucial to the abolitionists (“Proclaim Liberty Throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof,” Leviticus 25:10), but these six seem to be the most common and useful expressions. The Golden rule is omnipresent; it is on the masthead of *The Liberator*.

Golden Rule, the giving of servants their due, the prohibition of theft, and the earning of sustenance by the sweat of the brow.

Abolitionists became the greatest proponents of the principle of noncoercion in the United States between the Revolution and the Civil War, and their deployment of the Golden Rule almost by itself encapsulated the entire movement. The Golden Rule served as their obvious link to evangelical Christianity. In the radical Protestant sects that thrived in North America—Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and others—noncoercion (and voluntarism) played a well-developed part of their theology.³⁴ Abolitionists read the Golden Rule as the divine mandate that people must forego violence in their relations with others—including economic relationships. As a result, no group spoke more about a world without force than did the abolitionists.³⁵ Their entire economic condemnation of slavery can be reduced almost to the single point of the sin of one person forcing others for economic gain. Abolitionists commonly defined slavery as rule by violence. Moncure Conway expressed the common abolitionist view when he wrote: "In essence, Slavery is the imposition of one will on another by physical force; in that alone it differs from spontaneous or free labor."³⁶

³⁴ See A. J. Beitzinger, *A History of American Political Thought* (New York, 1972), 31-35, 38, 42-43; Perry Miller quoted by Richard J. Ellis, *American Political Cultures* (New York, 1993), 9; James F. Cooper, Jr., "Higher Law, Free Consent, Limited Authority: Church Government and Political Culture in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts," *New England Quarterly*, 69 (June, 1996), 201-22; Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, 1986); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago, 1978), 79; Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York, 1986), 152-58; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1980), 3-16; see Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North during the Second Party System," *Journal of American History*, 77 (Mar. 1991), 1216-38; Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, 1993), 13-19, 35; C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War* (Macon, GA, 1985), 11-13, 153-61; Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, 1994), 4-5, 23-27.

³⁵ See remarks of Gerald Sorin, *Abolitionism: A New Perspective* (New York, 1972), 58; Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (New York, 1982), 47, 63-64, 102, 105; Davis, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 263-81.

³⁶ Quote from Moncure D. Conway, *The Golden Hour* (1862; rep., New York, 1969), 28. For other examples, Jane Grey Swisshelm, *Half a Century* (3d ed.; Chicago, 1880), 53; Theodore Dwight Weld, *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839; rep., New York, 1968), 7; C. M. Clay, speech in New York City, [1846], in *The Writings of Cassius Marcellus Clay, Including Speeches and Addresses*, ed. Horace Greeley (1848; rep., New York, 1969), 192; Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on Slavery" [1841], in Cobbe, *et al.*, eds.,

The abolitionists viewed history as a march from coercion to noncoercion, from tyranny to republicanism—which fact was the source of abolitionists' approval of republicanism. Wendell Phillips gave a speech on women's rights in 1851 in which he said, "The law has been always wrong. Government began in tyranny and force, began in the feudalism of the soldier and bigotry of the priest; and the ideas of justice and humanity have been fighting their way, like a thunder-storm, against the organized selfishness of human nature." Likewise, Cassius M. Clay took time to dissect the ruinous consequences of "FORCE" in human history and to show how humankind had struggled to implement the system of "mutual interest." Indeed, some abolitionists traveled this ideological road nearly to anarchy: in a letter declaring their commitment to the principle of Non-Resistance, William Lloyd Garrison, Maria Weston Chapman, and Edmund Quincy stated that the vital lesson of religion was for humans to live by the "great law of Love," and not, as had all past societies, by the terror of physical force.³⁷

Evangelical Christianity also reinforced the principle of noncoercion by establishing the means of acquiring salvation. To receive grace the individual

Collected Works of Parker, V, 1-2; Amos A. Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery and Its Remedy* (Boston, 1834), 30-31; Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (Washington, DC, 1948), 5; Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (1950; rep., Gloucester, MA, 1965), 176-78; Donald G. Mathews, "Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary," in Martin Duberman, ed., *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, 1965), 74; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 3.

³⁷ Wendell Phillips, "Woman's Rights" [1851], in Wendell Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters of Wendell Phillips* (1884, 1891; rep., New York, 1968), I, 14; "Harpers Ferry," 1859, *ibid.*, I, 269, 272; Cassius Clay, "Hints on Religious and Civil Liberty," in Greeley, ed., *Writings of Cassius Marcellus Clay*, 26, 27, 30. See Stephen Alexander Hodgson, *The Nation's Sin and Punishment; or, The Hand of God Visible in the Overthrow of Slavery* (New York, 1864), 25; McNerney, *Fortunate Heirs of Freedom*, 7-8. For the attack on slavery because of its illegitimate use of force at the time of the Revolution, see *Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advertiser*, Mar. 8, 1774, in *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner (2 vols., New York, 1945), II, 16; *A Respectable Member of the Community, Extract of an Address* (np, 1767), 2; John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Slavery," in Anthony Benezet, ed., *A Collection of Religious Tracts* (Philadelphia, 1773), 18-34; [Rice], *Slavery Inconsistent*, 3, 6; Timothy Dwight, *An Oration Spoken Before "The Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom and the Relief of Persons Unlawfully Holden in Bondage"* (Hartford, 1794), 14. On non-resistance, see William L. Garrison, Maria Weston Chapman, and Edmund Quincy to John Smith, Mar. 1, 1839, "Statement of the non Resistance Society," in *African American Papers*, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich. Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, 1973); Carleton Mabee, *Black Freedom: The Nonviolent Abolitionists from 1830 through the Civil War* (New York, 1970); Henry Mayer, *All On Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York, 1998), 250-51.

had to accept without reservation the revealed truths of the New Testament. Such acceptance was wholly voluntary; if forced by ecclesiastical or secular authorities it was deception. Coercion implied that the human heart had not been truly transformed. Associations might assist the individual, and persuasion was possible, but the ultimate act of acceptance of New Testament authority came wholly from individual choice. From this emphasis on volition followed obvious doctrines: all persons must assume responsibility for their moral actions (i.e., self-discipline), unregenerate could be transformed only by persuasion through voluntary associations with the regenerate, and physical force had no place in furthering religious or secular objectives.³⁸

From these biblical precepts and other comments, the abolitionist understanding of economic principles can be outlined. Most prominently, abolitionists transferred the idea of noncoercion in religious affairs to economic affairs. The religious power found in the Golden Rule and in the evangelical means of obtaining salvation almost automatically implied an economy based on voluntary consent. Business transactions could only be justified if they were produced by mutual agreement and not by force. For the abolitionists, government stood as a prime example of how the aristocratic few manipulated power to steal the earnings of the multitude. Indeed, the principle of noncoercion virtually pushed the abolitionists into the free trade, laissez-faire camp, making the abolitionists appear as supportive of capitalism as any group in the nation.³⁹

Indeed, abolitionists often fervently advocated Jacksonian economic liberalism. Abolitionists generally promoted free trade (although there was

³⁸ Goodheart, *Elizur Wright*, 165; Richard O. Curry and Lawrence B. Goodheart, "'Knives in Their Heads': Passionate Self-Analysis and the Search for Identity in American Abolitionism," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 14 (Winter 1983), 401-14; Lawrence Thomas Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelism and Antislavery in Antebellum America* (Metuchen, NJ, 1980), 84-85; Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North during the Second Party System," 1218; Hugh Davis, *Joshua Leavitt: Evangelical Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge, 1990), x; Stanley G. Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey and Antislavery Union* (Kent, OH, 1986), 16-17; Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York, 1969), 252-55. It should be noted that the emphasis on noncoercion fit well with the idea of natural law so prevalent among the abolitionists; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (New York, 1987), 76; Benjamin Fletcher Wright, Jr., *American Interpretations of Natural Law: A Study in the History of Political Thought* (1931; rep., New York, 1962), 212-14. Abolitionists were not necessarily opposed to punishments for breaking laws but were against using force to obtain what society had deemed were legitimate goals.

³⁹ An example of antigovernment attitudes is Garrison, Chapman, and Quincy to Smith, Mar. 1, 1839, "Statement of the Nonresistance Society," in African American Papers, Clements Library. For the near anarchistic tendency of the abolitionists, consult Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*.

some dissonance here), small government, and, like Joshua Leavitt, free postage laws. An obituary of abolitionist Charles F. Hovey stressed his devotion to democratic ideals: when Hovey lived, the world was “Whig, Protective, and Bank-believing. He professed himself a Democrat, a Free-Trader, and a Hard-money man, in times when such opinions were regarded with an intolerance scarcely credible now.” Within abolitionism a consistent antimonopoly strand was visible that attacked banking and protectionism. Alvan Stewart, one of the creators of the Liberty Party, stressed the similarities between abolitionists and Jacksonian Democrats on key economic issues and doctrines:

We believe every innocent man upon earth has the best right to himself, his wife, his children, his earnings, his labor, his liberty and life, and do not Democrats believe the same? This is Abolition; and is not this Democracy? Democrats profess to be anti-monopolists; what monopoly so great as for 250,000 slaveholders to monopolize the labor of 3,000,000 of people, without compensation?

Although some historians have written about the republican, anticapitalist nature of Jacksonian Democracy and the procapitalist exhortations of the abolitionists, the reality is that on matters of governmental policy, the locofoco Democrats, the southern fireaters, and the abolitionists made up the nightmarish trinity of American *laissez faire*.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Obituary of Hovey in *Liberator*, May 13, 1859; Alvan Stewart, “An Address by the ‘National Committee of Correspondence,’” [1840], *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart, on Slavery*, ed. Luther Rawson Marsh (New York, 1860), 244-45; see [William Elder], *Third Parties: The Duty of Anti-Slavery Voters* (Philadelphia, 1851), 3, 13, 15-18; John G. Whittier to *National Era*, Feb. 5, 1847, in *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, ed. Samuel T. Pickard (2 vols., Boston, 1894), II, 69; Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon Portland Chase* (Boston, 1899), 87-88, 101; comment of Richard Cobden on Joseph Sturge, 1835, in Elizabeth Hoon Cawley, ed., *The American Diaries of Richard Cobden* (Princeton, 1952), 203; Maria Weston Chapman, *Right and Wrong in Massachusetts* (Boston, 1839), 9; Joshua Leavitt, *The Financial Power of Slavery: The Substance of an Address Delivered in Ohio, in September, 1840* (np, 1841?), 2-3; *Liberator*, Jan. 7, 1832, quoted in Truman Nelson, ed., *Documents of Upheaval: Selections from William Lloyd Garrison’s “The Liberator,” 1831-1865* (New York, 1966), 41; James G. Birney to Russell Errett, Aug. 5, 1844, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, Dwight L. Dumond, ed. (1938; rep., Gloucester, MA, 1966), II, 829-31; Hugh Davis, *Leavitt*, 214, 225-26, 282; Betty Fladeland, *James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist* (New York, 1955), 211, 232-33, 258-59; Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo-American Context, 1830-1860* (Athens, GA, 1979), 29-30; Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith: A Biography* (New York, 1878), 184-85, 216; Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey*, 99-101; Elder, *Third Parties*, 3-11. For Democrats, see Sean Wilentz, “Slavery, Antislavery, and Jacksonian Democracy,” in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution*

A second economic doctrine—self-ownership—also had roots in the biblical strictures employed by the abolitionists. This particular idea actually was not discussed in detail by political economists—they either accepted property rights in people as a strange problem to deal with or simply declared its existence a mistake. However, in the historiographical literature the doctrine of self-ownership claims a special significance because in political theory the enunciation of the idea is linked to the origins of modern capitalist thought. John Locke posited self-ownership as the first natural right of all, and from that he then extended the idea to cover ownership of whatever an individual's labor created, and then he propounded a natural right to all private property. Hence the claim for self-ownership can be seen as the first step in sanctifying private property, and private property is the main institutional requirement for capitalism. C. B. Macpherson holds that Locke's doctrine of self-ownership transformed people, or their labor power, into a "commodity out of which riches and dominion might be derived." Self-ownership released individuals from their obligations to society and provided for the alienation of labor power.⁴¹

"MAN CANNOT BE PROPERTY, "pronounced virtually all abolitionists.⁴² Amos A. Phelps in 1834 declared the principle was wrong, whether cruelty resulted or not, because no one consented to be a slave. The only way slaveholders obtained slaves was by force: thus slavery was a product of coercion and thereby unchristian.⁴³ Whether the doctrine of self-

in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880, (Charlottesville, VA, 1996), 202-23; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), 211-12, 237-43; Charles G. Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York, 1991), 325-26, 332-63.

⁴¹ C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, UK, 1962), 229-31, also 200-03, 214-33; see also Brown, *Politics of Individualism*, 3.

⁴² Stanton, *Remarks . . . on the Subject of Slavery*, 21.

⁴³ Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery*, 26-28, 30, 39-40, 115-16. The following footnotes will be extensive to show how prevalent these arguments were. T. Weld to J. F. Robinson, May [1], 1836, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weald, and Sarah Grimké*, ed. Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond (1934; rep., Gloucester, MA, 1965), 296; Weld, *Bible Against Slavery*, 17; Lyman Atwater, "The Principle of Slavery," *American Quarterly Observer*, 5 (July 1834), 29-31; George B. Cheever, *The Guilt of Slavery and the Crime of Slaveholding, Demonstrated from the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures* (Boston, 1860), xv, xviii-xix; Blanchard, *Sermon on Slave-Holding*, 4-5; Church Anti-Slavery Society of Worcester, *Proceedings* (Worcester, 1859), 9, 15; James M. Dickinson, *An Anti-Slavery Sermon, delivered at Norwich, July 4, 1834* (2d ed., 1834; rep., New York, 1969), 4, 16-18; Rev. Charles Elliott, *Sinfulness of American Slavery: Proven from Its Evil Sources* (Cincinnati, 1851), I, 15, 109-15; Channing, *Slavery*, 13; Tyler, *Slaveholding a Malum in Se*, 12, 14-16; Fee, *Anti-Slavery Manual*, 13; Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on Slavery," in Cobbe, ed., *Works of Parker*, V, 1-2;

ownership inevitably led to a capitalist system is unclear, but it is of some interpretive consequence to determine whether abolitionists celebrated self-ownership in a contractual fashion, as Amy Dru Stanley posits, or whether they intended only that self-ownership established the capacity to develop and explore one's self without domination from another. Abolitionists often discussed property-in-oneself not only in terms of the forfeiture of economic improvement, but also the lack of participation in the construction of the slave's own character, talent, familial ties, religious growth, and relations with others. William Wilson, a somewhat obscure abolitionist, provided a fairly common discussion of self-ownership in 1848. He argued that slavery "robs the slave of himself—of his property; for it takes himself, and his time, and his labors, without his consent, and without any proper equivalent—of his character; for it sinks him to a level with the beasts of the field, or any other property of the slaveholder."⁴⁴

John G. Whittier, "Justice and Expediency," 1833, in *The Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (7 vols., Boston, 1892), VII, 13, 18; William Jay, "Inquiry Into the character and Tendency of the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies" [1835] in Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery*, 128-29; [Rice], *Slavery Inconsistent*, 20-22; Rev. George M. Bassett, *Slavery Examined by the Light of Nature: A Sermon* (np, 1858), 4-5; John Woolman, *Consideration on Keeping Negroes*, 16-17; speech of Joshua Giddings, Feb. 13, 1847, in *Congressional Globe*, 29th Cong., 2d sess., Appendix, 457; "An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes," Price, ed., *Freedom Not Far Distant*, 11; William O. Blake, comp., *The History of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Ancient and Modern* . . . (Columbus, 1857), xvi, 22; [Rush], *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in American Upon Slave-Keeping*, 16; William C. Beecher, *A Biography of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher* (New York, 1888), 119; Lyman Atwater, "The Principle of Slavery," *American Quarterly Observer*, 5 (July 1834), 28-31; Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery*, 39-40, 60; Abraham Pryne in Brownlow and Pryne, *Ought American Slavery to be Perpetuated*, 63; McKivigan, *War Against Pro-Slavery Religion*, 19-20. The biblical assault on property rights in people was only slightly less prominent than an appeal to natural rights. Arising from enlightenment ideas of individualism, the natural rights approach said that each person had an inalienable right to his own person, to life, liberty, and property. See, for example, speech of William H. Furness in *Liberator*, July 29, 1859.

⁴⁴ William Wilson, *The Great American Question: Democracy vs. Doulocracy: or, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, & Free Speech Against the Extension and Domination of the Slaveholding Interest* . . . (Cincinnati, 1848), 11. See also story in Gary Lee Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 9; "The Wrongs of Slavery," quoted in (Philadelphia) *Pennsylvania Freeman*, Apr. 12, 1849; editorial in New York *Independent*, Oct. 3, 1850, 162; (Washington, DC) *National Era*, Mar. 25, 1847. Actually the difficulty, from one perspective, is using the word "property" at all. If one starts with the idea of property, then to deny a person self-ownership is equivalent to saying the person belongs to another entity. No one in the North was going to deny self-ownership once the discourse started out with the question, who owns humans? The proper starting point is probably to deny the application of the concept of property to people altogether, but so far as I can tell, this was enormously difficult in the discussion of slavery because the first defense

The most prominent economic doctrine employed by the abolitionists was a modified labor theory of value—the idea that all laborers deserved the fruits of his labor. John Fee insisted that “every man has by nature a right to the products of his own labor. Whatever value I create by my own labor, or by the innocent use of the other means which God has given me, is mine.” Nathaniel Paul, an early black abolitionist, stated that a biblical sin of slavery was that it violated God’s ordinance after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, that man “should obtain his bread by the sweat of his brow,” and not by stealing it from others. Benjamin Rush held that God commanded that men be free and gave him the earth “that he might cultivate his possession with the sweat of his brow; but still should enjoy his Liberty.” Free labor—that is, labor to earn a comfortable living—was in the abolitionist camp both as a natural and divine right.⁴⁵

Labor theory quickly raised the question of incentive, which abolitionists exploited eagerly. Slaves were forced by the whip to labor, therefore their effort had to be minimal. As Frederick Douglass said, the slave “toils that another may reap the fruit; he is industrious that another may live in idleness.” The operating assumption, of course, was that the free worker, living without coercion and stimulated by reward, worked harder than a slave. Wrote C. C. Burleigh of the self-possessed laborer, “freedom makes him infinitely more than a mere working-tool[;] he is now a man, with all the priceless treasures of mind and soul.” The greater output of free versus coerced labor was “as much as brain and muscle are worth more than muscle only; as much as moral joined to mental power is a better wealth than mere brute force.” Being more productive, free labor was more beneficial to society because it produced more wealth and distributed it more fairly. That this should be true was only, in abolitionist thinking, the logical economic result of obeying moral strictures in regard to how people should treat each other—the Golden Rule.⁴⁶

of slavery by southerners was that slaves were property. That pronouncement almost automatically set up the northern response.

⁴⁵ Fee, *Anti-Slavery Manual*, 140; Paul, “The Abolition of Slavery,” [1827], in Woodson, ed., *Negro Orators and Orations*, 66; [Rush], *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America Upon Slave-Keeping*, 7; Channing, *Slavery*, 72. See William Lloyd Garrison to the *Liberator*, Sept. 13, 1832, in Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, eds., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (6 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1971-1981), I, 167; Theodore Parker, “A Letter to the People of the United States Touching the Matter of Slavery,” [1848] in Cobbe, ed., *Collected Works of Parker*, V, 39; Woolman, *Consideration on Keeping Negroes*, 32-34; Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent*, 4.

⁴⁶ Douglass, “Lecture on Slavery” [1850], in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Philip Foner, ed. (5 vols., New York, 1950), II, 135; Charles C. Burleigh, *Slavery and the North* (New York, 1855), 3; A. Hogeboom to George Fitzhugh, 1857, in Fitzhugh and Hogeboom, *Controversy on Slavery*, 36; Channing, *Slavery*, 72-79, 100, 104-07; William L.

Strident individualism among abolitionists produced statements from them that appeared to be astonishingly supportive of laissez-faire capitalism.⁴⁷ On occasion, abolitionists mentioned the “natural” forces of supply and demand as did nearly all their contemporaries. An editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1860 wrote of price fluctuation that it was “but the wholesome competition of demand and supply, by which all nature’s discord makes all nature’s peace.” William Jay used a supply and demand analysis to explain high wages in the United States. Gerrit Smith withheld his approval of public schools because he thought individual self-interest would take care of education, while Gamaliel Bailey at the *National Era* explicitly embraced the doctrines of laissez faire. After the Civil War, Wendell Phillips lectured that “every competition that comes in natural currents, from individual enterprise, is a healthy tendency to average.” John G. Whittier turned to Adam Smith to explain the backwardness of slavery, and Cassius M. Clay attacked Fourierism and trade unions because they ignored or contradicted self-interest, a basic ineradicable passion.⁴⁸

Massachusetts abolitionist Amasa Walker illustrated how the economic doctrines of the abolishment movement led to an embrace of laissez-faire capitalism. Walker amassed a small fortune in the shoe trade, retired in the 1840s, and then devoted the next three decades to reform activity, especially abolitionism. Just as important, he had been a professor of political economy at Oberlin College. In 1866 Walker produced a textbook, the *Science of*

Garrison letter, 1829, in Garrison and Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison* I, 143; proceedings from a Princeton, NJ, American Colonization Society, 1824, in Price, ed., *Freedom Not Far Distant*, 102; John G. Whittier, “Justice and Expediency” [1833], in *Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, VII, 34-45; Parker, “A Letter to the People of the United States Touching the Matter of Slavery,” [1848], in Cobbe, ed., *Works of Parker*, V, 39-40; Richard Hildreth, *Despotism in America; or An Inquiry into the Nature and Results of the Slave-holding System in the United States* (Boston, 1840), 111-17; Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery*, 225-31; C. M. Clay, “Address to the People of Kentucky” [1846], in Greeley, ed., *Writings of Clay*, 173-95.

⁴⁷ The individualism of the abolitionists is covered in any number of works; see Stewart, *Holy Warriors*; and esp. Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*; and Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*.

⁴⁸ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Sept. 15, 1860; William Jay, “A Letter to the Right Rev. L. Silliman Ives . . .,” in Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery*, 479-81; Gerrit Smith speech in *New York Tribune*, Oct. 7, 1858; Wendell Phillips, “The Chinese,” in *Speeches, Lectures and Letters of Wendell Phillips*, II, 149; *National Era*, Oct. 29, 1857, Aug. 27, 1857; Clay, “Elevation of Labor” in Greeley, ed., *Writings of Cassius Clay*, 349-50; Whittier, “Justice and Expediency,” [1833], in *Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, VII, 42. See Stanley G. Harold, “The Perspective of a Cincinnati Abolitionist: Gamaliel Bailey on Social Reform in America,” *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, 35 (Fall 1977), 173-90; and Lawrence S. Friedman, “The Gerrit Smith Circle: Abolitionism in the Burned-Over District,” *Civil War History*, 26 (Mar. 1980), 18-38.

Wealth, that promoted laissez faire, although he rejected Malthus on wages.⁴⁹ He praised supply and demand but recognized problems in labor relations. Capital could concentrate, Walker admitted, "and its power over labor" was thereby "augmented." But the solution to this imbalance was found in "just and equal laws, with no exclusive legislation for one at the expense of the other." Under those conditions, labor and capital "may exist together with perfect harmony and reciprocity of interests."⁵⁰

Of course, the abolitionist critique of slavery contained far more criticisms than the ones given here. To convince Americans of the evil of the institution, abolitionists pointed out the results, as they saw them, of the immoral practice. The South was a wasteland; labor was not respected, improvements were not made, and laziness lay over the land. Slavery produced a divided society of the few rich and the many poor. The slaveholders became an aristocracy, and like all aristocracies they sought to monopolize political power, install their policies, extinguish the Bill of Rights, reduce northern citizens to serfs, and establish an oligarchy. Biblical arguments predominated. The modern abolitionist movement that appeared after 1830 ceaselessly paraded these arguments before the public. Nonetheless, the economic analysis presented above infused the whole of abolitionist literature and speeches and therefore represents a fair summation of the economic concepts that grew out of their moral and religious convictions.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Amasa Walker, *The Science of Wealth: A Manual of Political Economy* (Philadelphia, 1866), 32-34, 55-64. A short biography of Walker's early life can be found in the Boston *Daily Republican*, May 1, 1849, in Amasa Walker Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston) scrapbook, no. 1, 175. Another individual, antislavery but not abolitionist, that showed the pairing of religious doctrines and classical economics was Francis Wayland, political economist, Baptist minister, and president of Brown University. Wayland is instructive on the economics of wages and his insistence that the only Christian means of dealing with others was to arrange labor by "contract or consent" because of "the law of our Creator[:] *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* []." Rev. Richard Fuller and Rev. Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution . . .* (rev. ed., New York, 1845), 7, 48; James L. Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 1987), 67-69.

⁵⁰ Amasa Walker, "Address of the Free Soil Members to their Constituents," from Boston *Daily Republican*, Apr. 23, 1849, in Scrapbook No. 1, 55, Amasa Walker Papers. See also Amasa Walker, "Political Economy—Wages," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, 31 (Aug. 1854), 179-80.

⁵¹ The belief that slavery produced aristocracy, degraded labor, and a backward South predates the abolitionists and was common in political speeches; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (2d ed., New York, 1995), chap. 2; the republican doctrines in abolitionism can be found in McInerney, *Fortunate Heirs of Freedom*; on the early development of these views, see Huston, *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, 60-66, 309-15.

By parallel routes—but not the same routes—abolitionists followed doggedly the trail of noncoercion—of voluntary association among independent individuals. In so traveling they closely paralleled the development of noncoercion in capitalist political economy. Not much separated abolitionists and political economists in terms of policy and advocacy of social institutions. However, the source of the noncoercion for political economy and abolitionism was different, and because of the different origins, important strands of abolitionist economic thinking diverged significantly from political economists. While they recognized the rights of property, labor, and natural market forces, abolitionists sought a moral, not just a natural society. Consequently they found fault in letting supply and demand rule all matters; they disliked the power property had over individuals; they feared wealth; and they found wage labor unsettling. Abolitionists demanded a noncoercive setting, but they insisted that the results of that setting, be governed by Christian benevolence and not merely by the secular laws of supply and demand.⁵²

The wage question demonstrates the abolitionists' growing critical attitude toward free market ideals and the capitalist ethos. Abolitionists celebrated wages frequently enough, but a few qualifications have to be considered. First, abolitionists never believed that a free labor system should result in subsistence wages. British political economists, on this point, were simply wrong. Secondly, the wage bargain reflected the moral character of two individuals making a voluntary transaction, and it could be injurious or beneficial. Abolitionists realized that wage labor could be unfair when governed by the wrong passions. Third, the word "wage" often meant to them any compensation or reward, not a strictly dependent condition. At times, for example, abolitionists used free labor and wages to describe the rewards of yeoman farmers who in many ways qualified more as entrepreneurs.⁵³

The clearest sign that abolitionists believed that free labor societies ought to provide high wages or adequate remuneration was their condemnation of the rewards earned from slavery. The whole point of their analysis was that

⁵² A brief aside needs to be made about property, a subject close to the heart of capitalism. Abolitionists did not discuss property at length except in four circumstances: (1) they approved of property earned as the fruit of individual labor, and thus we may conclude they generally considered property a justifiable institution; (2) their greatest comments about property arose when denouncing property rights in people; (3) they commonly exploded in wrath over the fact that the respectable and propertied element of society opposed them; and (4) they insisted that human rights took precedence over property rights. Most political economists took care to lay out the legitimation of property rights, something the abolitionists did not.

⁵³ For an example, see Henry C. Wright, "Old England and New England Laborers on Land Contrasted," *Liberator*, May 26, 1848, 81.

the slave was being robbed of his true—i.e., natural, or moral, or free labor system—earnings. The central economic sin of slavery, wrote Whittier, was the failure to follow the Bible and “let the laborer have his hire”—meaning, of course, that the slave was paid less for his or her services than in a system of voluntary association. Elizur Wright exclaimed that slaves were “compelled to labor without choice and without hire.” Black abolitionists had no difficulty in denouncing the system, as Henry Bibb said, that had compelled him “to work under the lash without wages.”⁵⁴ In 1860, Charles Sumner gave a speech at the Cooper Institute denouncing the peculiar institution. This was partially an economic indictment, and his fifth point was that slavery was “*the absolute robbery of the labor of another and all its fruits,*” and thus the “*single motive*” of slavery was “*to compel Labor without wages.*” Whether Sumner had in mind that all laborers should be dependent wage earners is moot; the brunt of the argument was that slaves were robbed of their rightful reward. And the logic of the situation irresistibly drew to the conclusion that free labor systems offered higher rewards than slavery.⁵⁵

Here especially the differences between abolitionists and classical economists reveal themselves. Economists claimed that wages were set by the market, by the forces of supply and demand. This was never the response of abolitionists. For them, the wage was first of all a “just Reward”—said both John Woolman and John G. Whittier, one hundred twenty years apart—and, as Garrison maintained, it would certainly be superior to that received from compulsion.⁵⁶ William Goodell in the *American Slave Code* devoted a chapter to “Coerced Labor, Without Wages,” and said that any wage system to be “legitimate, must be equitable, or equal,” and that condition implied that wages must be more than “a comfortable sustenance as a mere animal.” What was to insure that services rendered would result in equitability was “the law

⁵⁴ Whittier, “Justice and Expediency,” [1833], in Whittier, *Works*, VII, 34; Wright, *Sin of Slavery*, 3; Channing, *Slavery*, 53; narrative of Henry Bibb, in Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin’ On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northrup* (New York, 1969), 65. See also Frederick Douglass, “The Address of Southern Delegates . . .” [1850], in Philip Foner, ed., *Life and Writings of Douglass*, I, 358; Henry Highland Garnet, “An Address to the Slaves . . .” [1843], in Woodson, ed., *Negro Orators and Their Orations*, 153; Child, *An Appeal*, 76-77; Alvan Stewart speech against slavery [1835], and Address to the Abolitionists of New York, [1836], in Marsh, ed., *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart*, 53, 90.

⁵⁵ Sumner speech, July 11, 1860, in *New York Tribune*, July 12, 1860, 6. See Elliott, *Sinfulness of American Slavery*, I, 118.

⁵⁶ Woolman, *Some Consideration on the Keeping of Negroes*, 27; John G. Whittier, “The Republican Party,” [1885], in Whittier, *Works of Whittier*, VII, 240-41; *Liberator*, Mar. 6, 1857; William L. Garrison to Ezra Hervey Heywood, July 30, 1860, in Merrill and Ruchames, eds., *Letters of Garrison*, IV, 677.

of mutual necessity and mutual interest," "reciprocity," "mutuality," and "the natural fruit of their toil." George B. Cheever, who directly investigated the biblical meaning of voluntary labor and slave labor, constantly stressed the fairness of exchange under voluntary conditions.⁵⁷

In the end, biblical righteousness and Christian brotherhood should govern the wage relationship, according to abolitionists, not supply and demand. Nor should the laws of supply and demand govern the entire economy. Biblical strictures had to rule all human relationships. Cheever once wrote in this vein that the abolitionists "do not preach to the people on a question of mere expediency, or diplomacy, or profit, or political economy, or statesmanship, or even of what is best, but of what is right, of what God allows. The question of slavery is not a question of power or revenue, but of RECTITUDE."⁵⁸ For the abolitionists, wages did not mean misery, did not mean poverty, and did not mean dependence. Abolitionists saw nothing wrong in wage labor when guided by principles of Christian brotherhood.

And in many ways this becomes the crux of interpretations that seek to explain the relationship between abolitionists and capitalism. As labor orators frequently decried, in practice the market, or competition, drove down wages and made "the gain of one the ruin of another." Those fruits were taken by organized capitalists. Voluntary association, it would seem, had flaws: "On the 'let alone['] principle, capital will be always able to take advantage of labor, and for this simple reason that capital can wait—labor cannot."⁵⁹ Such criticism of the wage system was not confined to labor circles only.

⁵⁷ William Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Features shown by Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts* (1853; rep., New York, 1968), chap. 12, 151; Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery*, 230; Whittier, "What is Slavery?" [1843], in *Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, VII, 102; Theodore Parker, "The Present Crisis in American Affairs..." [1856], in Cobbe, ed., *Collected Works of Parker*, VI, 246; Cheever, *Guilt of Slavery and the Crime of Slaveholding*, i, 30, 329-30; see also Hildreth, *Despotism in America*, 40; A[n]gelina E. Grimké, *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (New York, nd [1836?]), 11.

⁵⁸ Cheever, *God Against Slavery*, 81.

⁵⁹ (New York) *Working Man's Advocate*, Mar. 1, 1845; *ibid.*, Oct. 5, 1844; *ibid.*, Apr. 26, 1845; speech of Alan E. Bovay, *ibid.*, Apr. 26, 1845. There is a rich exchange between spokesmen for the working class and abolitionists; see William West to Edmund Quincy, "Chattel and Wages Slavery," in *Liberator*, Sept. 25, 1846; William West to the *Liberator*, *ibid.*, Aug. 28, 1846; Thomas Ingersoll, "The Slavery of Wages," *ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1847; "Free and Slave Labor," *ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1847; William West to Garrison, *ibid.*, Apr. 23, 1847; "Wages—Labor," *National Era*, Apr. 20, 1848; Edward West to Garrison, in *Liberator*, Nov. 10, 1848; report of Workingmen's Convention at Boston, *ibid.*, Oct. 25, 1850. See Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Antebellum America," in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, eds., *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone, UK, 1980), 264-65.

Communitarians found plenty to fault in the "hireling" system. Even Horace Greeley admitted that the wage system, although better than slavery, was badly flawed.⁶⁰

Labor's solution to unfair practices—the formation of unions to demand a just share—also ran afoul of abolitionists' commitment to principles of noncoercion. Abolitionists only accepted unions as debating societies and self-help organizations. Unions sought to discipline their members and provide a united front against employers and thus ran the risk of coercing individuals. Committed morally to the idea of voluntary association, abolitionists simply could not condone strike activity.⁶¹ Labor reformers and abolitionists might (and often did) agree that free workers in the North did not receive a just remuneration, but they disagreed about the solution to the problem. Labor leaders wanted some type of institutional alteration; abolitionists preferred to exhort people to act upon the Christian duty of brotherly and sisterly affections for others.⁶²

⁶⁰ See Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on Merchants," in Cobbe, ed., *Works of Parker*, VII, 4-5, 11-13; Lecture on Association, from *The Harbinger*, June 5, 1847, in John R. Commons, et al., eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (11 vols., Cleveland, 1910), VII, 217-19; Orestes A. Brownson, "The Present State of Society," [1843], in *The Works of Orestes A. Brownson*, Henry F. Brownson, ed. (1882; rep., New York, 1966), 453; Adin Ballou, *History of The Hopedale Community, from Its Inception To Its Virtual Submergence in the Hopedale Parish*, ed. William S. Heywood (1897; rep., Philadelphia, 1972), v, 10-11; *Oneida Circular*, June 24, 1858; Parke Godwin, *A Popluar View of the Doctrines of Charles Fourier. With the Addition of Democracy, Constructive and Pacific* (1844; rep., New York, 1972), 6-16; Horace Greeley, *Essays Designed to Elucidate the Science of Political Economy*. . . (Boston, 1870), 83-91; Cunliffe, *Wage Slavery and Chattel Slavery*, 12, 21-28.

⁶¹ For example, see Cassius Clay, "Elevation of Labor," in Greeley, ed., *Writings Cassius M. Clay*, 350-51; Walker, *Science of Wealth*, 291-96; Goodheart, *Wright*, 164-65. On the relation of abolitionists to working class leaders, see Russel B. Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy* (1949; 2d ed., Urbana, 1972), 246-47, 253-54; Bernard Mandel, *Labor: Free and Slave; Workingmen and the Anti-Slavery Movement in the United States* (New York, 1955), 89-92; Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* (Baton Rouge, 1984), viii-xi, and *passim*; James Brewer Stewart, *Wendell Phillips: Liberty's Hero* (Baton Rouge, 1986), 258-63; Edward Magdol, *The Anti-Slavery Rank and File: A Social Profile of the Abolitionists' Constituency* (Westport, 1986), chaps. 4, 6; Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Antebellum America," 254-71; Louis S. Gerteis, *Morality and Utility in American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill, 1987), xiii-xiv; and Jonathan Glickstein, "'Poverty is Not Slavery': Abolitionists and the Competitive Labor Market," in Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspective on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge, 1979), 195-218.

⁶² In a discussion about wages slavery, Gamaliel Bailey admitted that a free system produced inequalities and that labor did not receive as fair a reward as did capital from the use of machinery. But his solution was a greater Christian brotherhood and an insistence that circumstances were not all-powerful; his true reform was "the *individual man*, fully conscious

Beyond the question of wages, the quality of abolitionist economic writing is disappointing. While it is possible to find individuals who managed to integrate economic liberalism (i.e., capitalism) with abolitionism, the majority of abolitionist writing remained strikingly innocent of political economy. The phrases the abolitionists used in regard to incentive, choice of employments, industriousness, wages, came chiefly from a common, not a specialized, vocabulary. The reasoning of political economists appears only in the smallest snatches in abolitionist literature. Although the concepts derived from noncoercion seem roughly equivalent, the writings of political economists differed greatly from those of abolitionists in style, organization of information, and mode of argumentation. Anyone who reads the (turgid) works of antebellum political economists will be struck immediately by the chasm that separates them from the wild, usually unruly, emotional style of the abolitionists.

For example, when abolitionists pondered the effects of emancipation, they drew upon wishful thinking more than logical applications of capitalist doctrine. Aware of the fears of their audience, abolitionists went to unusual lengths to prove that emancipation would not be socially, economically, or politically disruptive. They stressed that the end of slavery would revivify the southern economy and enhance its productivity. Elizur Wright provided a sequencing in which the ex-slaves continued to be field laborers but as "voluntary laborers, on equitable wages." At one point, William Jay admitted that perhaps initially wages would fall at the onset of emancipation, but he believed they would rise over time as the ex-slaves obtained education and knowledge about the economy. It may be surmised that abolitionists figured that emancipation would result in the process they imagined operated in the North—that wage-earning led to property accumulation and finally, over time, to independent status as a yeoman farmer or producer. Thus one Henry Cowles wrote to Elizur Wright in 1833 that the conversion to free labor would be drawn out, that the freedpeople would have to be trained "to live as freemen & take care of themselves." The final result would be citizenship and the transformation from "ignorant & dependent slaves" to "industrious, economical freeholders."⁶³

of his own responsibilities, under the control of Christian principle, relying solely upon God his own courageous manhood, who is to work out his own regeneration." That undoubtedly hit a sour note with labor leaders. *National Union*, Feb. 11, 1847.

⁶³ Wright, *Sin of Slavery*, 40; William Jay, "Inquiry Into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies" [1835], in Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery*, 195-98; Henry Cowles to Elizur Wright, Jan. 19, 1833, in *Elizur Wright Papers* (Library of Congress, Washington, DC); see also Elliott, *Sinfulness of Slavery*, II, 300-04; James Theodore Holley, "The Auspicious Dawn of Negro Rule," [1857], in Woodson, ed.,

And some of the abolitionist economic writing is pathetically simple and devoid of any economic analysis at all. William Goodell in a chapter on political economy resorted entirely to politics and finished by saying that northerners wanted free trade, but protectionism had been forced on the nation by southern slaveholders! Joshua Leavitt produced a small pamphlet warning of the financial power of slavery; it could be reduced to a belief that slavery ruined everything it touched and that all policies of the federal government were intended to benefit the South. William Jay at times developed supply and demand analysis, made a bow to land and population effects, but often went no further than to say slavery disgraced free labor and that slaveholders resembled an aristocracy. To explain the genesis of the Panic of 1857, William Lloyd Garrison employed the unknown economic doctrine of "NATIONAL DEMORALIZATION" due to slavery. For every example of abolitionist thinking in terms of economic liberalism, one can produce a counterexample of economic thinking that was gibberish.⁶⁴ Contemporaries knew this. This was the opinion of E. L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation*, in 1866, and Godkin was a person who understood prevailing economic theory:

A better sharpener of the moral sense [than antislavery], better discipline for the popular conscience, it would be difficult even to think of. But as an exercise for this higher qualities of the mind, for either the powers of observation or induction, it was not only worthless, but worse than worthless. The arguments by which slavery had to be assailed were deductions of the simplest kind from the simplest rules of morality, and, such as they were, they were old and well worn. A child could grasp them. . . . [The real work of agitators] was the presentation of the horrors and

Negro Orators, 243-45; William Lloyd Garrison to the President of the Anti-Slavery Convention . . . [1836], in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, ed. Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames (6 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1971-81), II, 30; Alvan Stewart, "An Address by the 'National Committee of Correspondence'" [1840], in Marsh, ed., *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart*, 238; Burleigh, *Slavery and the North*, 2-4; Phelps, *Lectures on Slavery*, 87; Hugh Davis, *Leavitt*, 281; Harrold, *Gamaliel Bailey*, 87. The view that emancipation would lead to genocide of blacks is not an abolitionist theme or at most was true for a small number. An example of an individual claiming that emancipation would lead to annihilation of blacks is the Maine antislavery Democratic editor George M. Weston, *The Progress of Slavery in the United States* (Washington, DC, 1857), 67.

⁶⁴ William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres* . . . (1852; rep., New York, 1968), 321-38; Leavitt, *Financial Power of Slavery*, [1-4]; William Jay, "Address to the Inhabitants of New Mexico . . ." [1849], in Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings*, 497-508; William L. Garrison to the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Oct. 20, 1857, in Ruchames and Merrill, eds., *Letters of Garrison*, IV, 493-94. See James L. Huston, "Abolitionists and an Errant Economy: The Panic of 1857 and Abolitionist Economic Ideas," *Mid-America*, 65 (Jan. 1983), 15-27.

abuses of slavery in a striking form to the popular eye . . . [It was the] work of artists, rather than of thinkers. . . . [Thus the nation got a] crop of moralists [who were not good at reasoning.] They look at nearly every question from an emotional point of view.⁶⁵

This emphasis of the abolitionists on morally correct behavior explains the obvious criticisms they leveled at the free enterprise economic system in the North, and it is indeed here that the problem of categorizing the economic thought of the abolitionists becomes unsolvable without reference to the idea of noncoercion and to a biblical political economy. Abolitionists faulted the northern economy for its lack of spirituality. They berated the rage for gain in the United States, which abolitionists saw as one of the root causes of slavery. John Woolman made the point explicitly: people could enjoy good lives with moderate amounts of labor “where no misapplied Power hinders it.” Godly individuals should be satisfied with such a middling life; only the desire for luxury and worldly possessions fed the system of compulsory labor.⁶⁶ Theodore Parker wondered where he could find morality in the practice of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, a direct attack on the logic behind the laws of supply and demand—a position that Whig statesman Robert Winthrop had called the “most important principle of commercial dealing.” (Significantly, Winthrop had been poking fun at the Puritan standard of economic behavior evidenced by John Cotton’s 1640 denunciation of merchant Richard Keayne’s charging too much for a keg of nails based upon consumer demand.)⁶⁷

The abolitionist attitude toward commerce and accumulation was revealed by the editor of the Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, *Agitator*, who would not debate moral laws and trade. “We do not at any time undertake to defend the laws of trade on moral grounds . . . because we consider those laws so

⁶⁵ E. L. Godkin, “Why Political Economy Has Not Been Cultivated in America,” *The Nation*, 5 (Sept. 26, 1867), 255-56.

⁶⁶ Woolman, *Consideration on Keeping Negroes, Part Second*, 32; more generally, see speech of Rev. C. Wadsworth in *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Oct. 24, 1857; speech of Theodore Parker in *New York Times*, Oct. 7, 1857.

⁶⁷ Theodore Parker, “A Sermon on Merchants,” [1846] in Cobbe, ed., *Works of Parker*, VII, 12; Robert C. Winthrop, “The Influence of Commerce,” [1845], in Winthrop, *Addresses and Speeches on Various Occasions, from 1852 to 1867* (4 vols., Boston, 1852-1886), I, 47-48. On the abolitionist attack of the market economy, see Goodman, *Of One Blood*, chaps. 7, 8, 10-11. Goodman’s belief that the abolitionists were thoroughly repulsed by the market revolution is probably too strong, but his general understanding is correct: abolitionists saw a misapplication of freedom and an unwillingness to abide by the Golden Rule. However, they did not really reject the free market, merely the self-interest that mainstream economics advocated.

loose in construction that they cannot be otherwise than immoral." Later the editor located with precision the abolitionist aversion to the market: "The laws of Trade are necessarily immoral; because they spring from the lust of riches, place and power." Likewise, an editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* berated the money lust of the age, as evidenced in both England and the United States: "Money! Money! Money! says Jonathan; what is anything worth that isn't in the price current?—Liberty, humanity, public virtue, what will they bring in the market?"⁶⁸

In addition abolitionists evinced a constant disgust at commercial and manufacturing activity. Part of that reprobation came from the fact that the wealthy in the North often sided with the South, not with the abolitionists.⁶⁹ Abolitionists doubted that morality of the "speculative itch." They questioned the system of competition and whether or not labor was getting its fair reward. James Russell Lowell wrote in 1845 that "the system of labor and of its reward at the North we sincerely believe to be but little better than that at the South."⁷⁰ Time after time abolitionists admitted that northern factory workers did not receive a fair wage. Still they insisted that freedom lifted even poor people above the condition of a slave. Indeed, even though labor leaders denounced abolitionists for failing to join their crusades, the abolitionist press proved to be an important outlet for labor's point of view.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Agitator*, Feb. 25, 1858; (New York) *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Aug. 6, 1846, 38.

⁶⁹ For example, (Hallowell, ME) *Liberty Standard*, June 18, 1846; Edward Palmer letter in *Liberator*, Apr. 2, 1858; John G. Whittier to *National Era*, Feb. 5, 1847, in Pickard, ed., *Life and Letters of Whittier*, II, 69; James Freeman Clarke, *Anti-Slavery Days* (New York, 1884), 112-14; Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences, 1819-1899* (Boston, 1899), 218; Lydia Maria Child to Convers Francis, Dec. 19, 1835, in Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland, eds., *Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880* (Amherst, MA, 1982), 41; Wendell Phillips speech, 1853, in Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters*, 143. See Hugh Davis, *Leavitt*, 138-39.

⁷⁰ James Russell Lowell, "Texas" [1845], in Lowell, *Anti-Slavery Papers*, I, 10; *National Era*, Aug. 27, 1857; William L. Garrison to *The Liberator*, Sept. 13, 1832, in Merrill and Ruchames, eds., *Letters of Garrison*, I, 167-68; Nathaniel P. Rogers, "Property," [1844], and "The Anti-Slavery Movement," [1845], in Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, *A Collection from the Miscellaneous Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers* (Manchester, NH, 1849), 285-87, 307-08; sermon of Henry Ward Beecher, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, Oct. 17, 1857; sermon of George Cheever, in *New York Herald*, Oct. 19, 1857.

⁷¹ On factory wages, see Richard Ringwood in (Washington, DC) *National Era*, Feb. 20, 1851; *ibid.*, editorial, Mar. 11, 1847; *ibid.*, editorial Mar. 25, 1847; *ibid.*, editorial July 20, 1848; speech of Henry Ward Beecher, in *Pennsylvania Freeman* (Philadelphia), May 23, 1857; "The White Slave," in (New York) *National Antislavery Standard*, Dec. 19, 1848, 114. For examples of the contributions labor leaders made to the abolitionist press, see editorial on John A. Collins, *Liberator*, Aug. 28, 1846, 139; letter of William West, *ibid.*, Aug. 28, 1846, 140; letter of William West, *ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1846, 152; letter of Thomas Ingersoll, *ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1847, 52; letter of William West, *ibid.*, Apr. 23, 1847, 67; letter from Robert Owen, *ibid.*, June 12, 1845,

So the question becomes, what was the system of economics that abolitionists favored? Their critique of the laissez-faire wage-labor system stood side by side with their critique of slavery—and by extension feudalism and all hierarchical social organizations. The fountainhead of abolitionist political economy was an evangelistic Protestant reading of biblical morality. They drew their sense of noncoercion from the antihierarchical animus of original Protestantism, then amplified it by the intense individualism of evangelicalism.⁷² Together those currents forged churches where people voluntarily came together to assist one another in leading righteous lives. And for dealings in the economic realm, abolitionists insisted upon the application of biblical morality. Biblical morality was not a market mechanism. It should be stressed that the abolitionists were a radical group in the broad meaning of the term—the radicals of Christian idealism. They pushed the doctrines of evangelical Christianity to their limits.⁷³

Abolitionists held a radical dream of a noncoercive society in which economic relationships were guided by Christian virtues of compassion, high-mindedness, fairness to all. Octavius B. Frothingham recollected abolitionism as an exercise in biblical perfectionism: “more than an attempt to apply the Beatitudes and the Parables to a flagrant case of inhumanity—it was regarded as a new interpreter of religion, a fresh declaration of the meaning of the Gospel, a living sign of the purely human character of a divine faith, an

8; letter of Edward West, *ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1848; report of Workingmen's Convention, *ibid.*, Oct. 25, 1850, 170; material on Robert Owen in *National Antislavery Standard*, Nov. 14, 1850, 98.

⁷² On the evangelical impulse in abolitionism and the abolitionist leaning toward anarchy, see B. Edmon Martin, *All We Want is Make Us Free: La Amistad and the Reform Abolitionists* (Lanham, MD, 1986), 51-56, 71-73, and *passim*; Mabee, *Black Freedom*, 66-71; Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959, 2d ed., Chicago, 1968), 157-93; Howe, “Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North,” 1220-23; Anthony J. Barker, *Captain Charles Stuart: Anglo-American Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge, 1986), 36-59; Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 13-23, 34-35, 42-44; McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion*, 19-30, 150; Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, 83-88; Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, xxiii, 19-36, 101-21, 171, 297-302; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners* (Baton Rouge, 1985), 4-7, 9-10.

⁷³ For example, a contributor (signed “D”) to the Hallowell, ME, *Liberty Standard*, attacked both southern slaveholders and northern capitalists as aristocracies seeking to impoverish labor and obtain servile obedience: “The former enforces it with bloody whips, and torturing thumbscrews—the latter, with present want, and prospective starvation.” The cure, however, for both aristocracies was regeneration by adherence to the Golden Rule: “Our principles are based on Human Brotherhood and equality, and if we triumph, these principles will be carried out. All kinds of slavish servitude will be destroyed. The vassalage of the soul to wealth, and power, will be overthrown, and the poor among us will be taught to feel that they are men—as good, in God's esteem, as the rich.” *Liberty Standard*, June 18, 1846.

education in brotherly love and sacrifice."⁷⁴ Abolitionists commonly talked about brotherhood and Christian community. And the key to that Christian community was a rejection of force and the open embrace of the Golden Rule.⁷⁵

Ultimately, biblical political economy proved exceedingly nebulous. Evidently private property offered no problem to radical abolitionists so long as it was truly the fruit of individual labor. It is not certain if they felt that inheritance was especially evil. Abolitionists probably had no quarrel with modest accumulations, with commercial exchange, or with reasonable amounts of social and economic inequality, although they testified against unfettered self-interest. They liked to imagine a system of progressive advancement similar to Theodore Parker's: "In the free States the farmer buys his land and his cattle; hires men to aid him in his work—he buys their labour. Both parties are served—this with labour, that with employment. In a few years the men who at first sold their labour will themselves become proprietors and hire others desirous of selling their services."⁷⁶ In all these activities, the key element was for human interactions to be governed by Christian principles, which should have eliminated any injustices. Abolitionists probably envisioned a community of the middle. Excessive property accumulation suggested too much attention to material life instead of spiritual improvement. Abject poverty, however, could mean either moral failure or oppression.

In a study of Liberty Party voting, historian Vernon Volpe demonstrated that support for the party came from knots of evangelical communities. Those communities were centered about a church and were not particularly attached

⁷⁴ Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Recollections and Impressions, 1822-1890* (New York, 1891), 49; see also 45; Cheever, *Guilt of Slavery*, xv-xvi; speech of Wendell Phillips in Philadelphia, in *Pennsylvania Freeman*, May 18, 1848; "Young America—Reform—Wages Slavery," in *National Era*, Feb. 11, 1847; comment on John A. Collins in *Liberator*, Aug. 28, 1846; Goldwin Smith, *The Civil War in America: An Address Read at the Last Meeting of the Manchester Union and Emancipation Society* (London, UK, 1866), 3.

⁷⁵ For example, John S. C. Abbott, *The History of the Civil War in America...* (2 vols., Springfield, MA, 1863-66), I, iv, 17; John Woolman, *Some Considerations On the Keeping of Negroes Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* (Philadelphia, 1754), 88, 2-3; Benezet, *Observations on Enslaving*, 9-13; Goldwin Smith, *The Civil War in America*, 4, 7-9; Whittier, "William Leggett," in Whittier, *Works of Whittier*, VI, 184-85; Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on the Perishing Classes in Boston," [1846], in Cobbe, ed., *Collected Works of Parker*, VII, 57-58; Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith*, 95. See Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, xi, 33-36; Friedman, *Gregarious Sains*, 3; Friedman, "Gerritt Smith Circle," 18-36; editorial in (Washington, DC) *National Era*, Feb. 11, 1847.

⁷⁶ Speech of Theodore Parker on Slavery and Industry, from *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Jan. 27, 1848, 137.

to modernization, industrialization, or commercialization. Rather they stood as communities of individuals held together by evangelical beliefs, attempting to employ biblical strictures in their daily lives, lives free from external coercion. The secret of the abolitionist political economy probably lies in the practices of such people as opposed to their formal statements on political economy. Those communities, I conjecture, have much to say about the attempt to create a noncoercive Christian society, but they are nearly mute on the topic of capitalism.⁷⁷

Abolitionists in their noncoercion creed came close to embracing anarchism, but they generally did not make the ultimate leap. A few abolitionists, especially the Garrison clique, never outgrew their antistate views. Others, like Wendell Phillips and Parker Pillsbury, saw the possibilities of using state power to rectify past wrongs and were willing to go beyond the confines of noncoercion—to order up land redistribution in the postbellum South. Such willingness to broach the ideal of noncoercion in fact testifies to the search of some abolitionists for equitable race relations.⁷⁸

But in the antebellum decades, the abolitionist attack on slavery found roots in an evangelical rejection of coercion as the organizing principle for social cohesion. Within Christianity, the dream of noncoercive community—original primitive Christianity—clearly predated all modern developments like capitalism and neorepublicanism—and even feudalism. In the modern period, however, noncoercion became a central feature in capitalist economic developments and market behavior, and so it was that the doctrine of noncoercion caused abolitionists to sound like capitalists—sometimes indeed become such. Indeed, when one considers what institutional structures a noncoercive economy would entail, the necessary similarity between laissez-faire capitalism and evangelical abolitionism becomes obvious. However, there remained a difference between economic liberalism and abolitionism. For the abolitionists, noncoercion derived from an evangelical Protestant understanding of biblical injunctions; for the political economists, noncoercion

⁷⁷ Vernon L. Volpe, *Forlorn Hope of Freedom: The Liberty Party in the Old Northwest, 1838-1848* (Kent, OH, 1990), xiii, xvi-xx, 57-77; see also William B. Rogers, "We Are All Together Now": *Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and the Prophetic Tradition* (New York, 1995), 29.

⁷⁸ James Brewer Stewart, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Challenge of Emancipation* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1992), 113, 179-82, 194-95. Mark Voss-Hubbard believes the Garrisonians went for state power during the Civil War but retreated when labor agitation emerged in the postbellum years, an interpretation that perhaps underestimates the amount of hostility to coercive powers within most abolitionist circles. Mark Voss-Hubbard, "The Political Culture of Emancipation: Morality, Politics, and the State in Garrisonian Abolitionism, 1854-63," *Journal of American Studies*, 29 (Aug. 1995), 159-84.

followed the secular discovery that unfettered enterprise led to more robust economic growth and economic efficiency than any alternative system. Morality based on the market versus morality based on the Bible: that was the crucial difference.

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