WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON:

NONRESISTANT CHRISTIAN MANLINESS

IN THE CAUSE OF IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION, AN ANALYSIS

A Thesis

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

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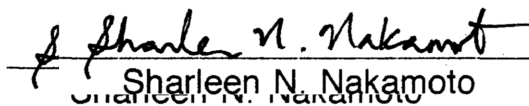

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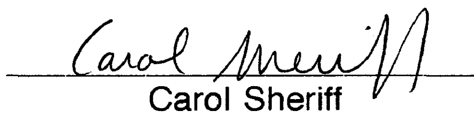

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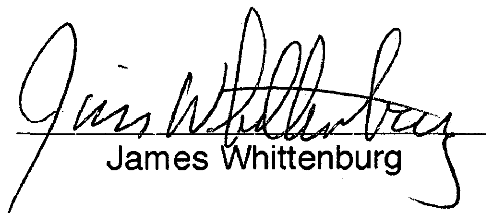

James Whittenburg

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the rhetoric, tactics, and efforts applied to uphold and advocate nonresistant Christian manliness by William Lloyd Garrison, the first white man to successfully organize efforts that championed northern blacks' demands for the immediate emancipation of American slaves.

Garrison's support for nonresistant Christian manliness was analyzed against the context of northern and southern middle- and upper-class whites' ideals of manliness, nineteenth-century millenialism and evangelicalism, and northern free and fugitive blacks' ideas of Christian manliness.

Garrison was remarkable in his support for blacks' emancipation and civil rights and for blacks' and women's right to assume some of the top leadership positions and responsibilities in abolitionist societies. However, there is much evidence to suggest that Garrison's support for Christian nonresistance as the most manly, Christian means for effecting immediate emancipation validated his leadership as a northern white Protestant male, was more advantageous for white than black abolitionists, denied the agency of free and enslaved blacks, and problematized slaves and the whites who joined them in taking physical and armed action against southern slaveholders. Some white abolitionists and many free and enslaved blacks proved their agency by pursuing their own alternative visions of manly Christian resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

On September 23, 1831, William Lloyd Garrison, a white Bostonian editor, responded to white southern editors' threatening and condemnatory notices against him and his abolitionist paper *The Liberator*, saying:

> I do not forget that Christ and his apostles,—harmless, undefiled and prudent as they were—were buffeted, calumniated and crucified; and therefore my soul is as steady to its pursuit as the needle to the pole. No dangers shall deter me. At the North or the South, at the East or the West,— wherever Providence may call me,—my voice shall be heard in behalf of the perishing slave, and against the claims of his oppressor.
>
> I am for immediate and total abolition.[1]

Garrison's distinction as the first white man to successfully organize efforts to promote the immediate emancipation of slaves—establishing the antislavery paper *The Liberator* in 1831 and co-establishing the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833—calls for close examination of his leadership as a northern white Protestant man. Although northern blacks had long called for the emancipation of slaves and equal rights with whites, Garrison's appeals were offered from a position of white, male authority. Based on arguments long made by blacks, by 1831 Garrison came to reject gradual efforts such as

[1] WLG to Joseph Gales and William W. Seaton, [23 September 1831], *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, vols. 1-6 (1822-1879), Walter E. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, eds. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 1:133. Printed in *The Liberator*, 15 October 1831.

compensated emancipation or colonization as unprincipled and impracticable.[2] Compensated manumission was hardly better than slavery since paying slaveholders to free their slaves only reinforced the belief that slaves were property rather than persons. As for colonization, the effort to transport blacks to Africa or the Caribbean, it was unfeasible, it was motivated by racist interests, and it denied generations of blacks their American heritage. In place of these options, Garrison joined blacks in insisting that the slave population, in excess of two million by 1830,[3] be freed without delay and granted all the rightful privileges of citizenship enjoyed by whites, including opportunities for education, legally sanctioned marriages, and compensated labor.[4]

Through his efforts to promote the highly unpopular cause of immediate emancipation, Garrison demonstrated that some white men were willing to decry the unjust advantages that their race and sex afforded them. Based on the belief that in Christ all are equal, Garrison included and relied on women and blacks, groups generally denied social, economic, and political power by ruling white men, and accepted the divisions and loss of support this caused in the American Anti-Slavery Society.[5] In his messianic zeal to effect immediate emancipation, it is undeniable that Garrison was given to suggesting in speeches, letters, and *The Liberator* that his morals and principles were

[2] Speech Made by Charles W. Gardner, Delivered at the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, New York, 9 May 1837, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:210, n214-215; William Still argues that William Watkins, a black preacher, shoemaker, and self-taught medical practitioner, convinced Garrison to abandon colonization and adapt black activists radical stance of immediate emancipation. Cited in Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee, 1992), 26.
[3] Peter J. Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989), 21.
[4] William E. Cain, *William LLoyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery: Selections from* The Liberator (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995), 9-13; "Proceedings of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society, at Its First Annual Meeting," *First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society* (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 197018-40.
[5] See Garrison's comments in "Proceedings of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, at its Fifth Annual Meeting, Boston, January 25, 1837." *First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society* , xxxv.

indisputable and superior because they were the most manly and the most Christian. In this way, as a white Protestant male he put himself above others, including the black race as a whole. Yet despite his "better than thou" visions of self-importance, Garrison was remarkable in his time for advocating the duty of women and blacks to support abolitionist societies, and for defending their right to assume some of the top leadership positions and responsibilities held by white male abolitionist members.

As Garrison attracted a loyal following, both black and white, he garnered the attention of those who admired and those who reviled his efforts. Amidst his adversaries and followers, Garrison applied his authority to define what constituted manly Christian behavior, specifically in relation to the controversial issue of whether white and black men should use physical and armed resistance to achieve immediate emancipation. Historians of abolition have noted that William Lloyd Garrison advocated and adhered to principles of nonresistance, but compared slave rebellions with the founding fathers' battles for liberty, tolerated abolitionists who rejected nonresistance, and even honored slave insurrectionists.

In "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton examine how Garrison's support and practice of nonresistance was disconcerting to most black Garrisonians' notion that "[m]anhood implied the willingness to take a strong, possibly militant, perhaps even violent stand against one's detractors, whether they be slaveholders or slave hunters."[6] In the same vein, in "Blacks, John Brown, and a Theory of Manhood," Daniel C. Littlefield focuses on how John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry momentously addressed tensions between

[6] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," in *Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston*, ed. Donald M. Jacobs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 127.

whites and blacks and within the black community regarding views on race, slavery, and the relationship between violence and notions of black manliness.[7] In terms of manly, nonresistant moral suasion, Kristen Hoganson's "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," and Nina Silber's "Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis: Northern Views of the Defeated South," discuss how Garrisonian abolitionists applied gendered language to defend the manliness of northern white male abolitionists and to advance the cause of immediate emancipation.[8] In all of the historians' aforementioned discussions about masculinity and the use of violence, Garrison's support for nonresistance is discussed only in terms of being in conflict with black ideals of manliness and in terms of being more connected with the views and efforts of northern white abolitionists. A gender analysis of Garrison's own discussion of his support for nonresistance as an act of Christian manliness has been neglected. Furthermore, examining Garrison's ideal of nonresistant Christian manliness is critical for understanding how religion can be applied as an uneven basis for validating one man's perspective as the higher law, and as an uneven basis for defining which men, black or white, are manly, exemplary men.

Like many social reformers of his day who espoused millenialist thought, Garrison claimed Christ was his model and strove to perfect his society to hasten the return of Christ and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.[9]

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[7] Daniel C. Littlefield, "Blacks, John Brown, and a Theory of Manhood," in *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 68.

[8] Kristen Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860." *American Quarterly* 45 (1993): 558-595; Nina Silber, "Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis: Northern Views of the Defeated South." *American Quarterly* 41 (1989): 614-635.

[9] For discussion of the religious context for antebellum reform efforts, see John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 20-21, and "The Missionary Impulse," in Ronald Walter's *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 21-37.

However, as a white male abolitionist leader, Garrison did not only idealize Christ as a model for his own actions but for others as well. He claimed that men who joined him in applying nonresistant, Christian moral suasion in the fight against slavery exhibited the highest level of manly Christian behavior. Although Garrison acknowledged that slaves were the most hard pressed and justified in using violent means, he would only justify their use of force with Revolutionary principles, not Christian ones.

Through this paper I will argue that analysis of Garrison's construction of nonresistant Christian manliness is critical because it reveals Garrison's paternalism, especially towards blacks, despite his almost unprecedented support as a white man for women and blacks. Although Garrison was committed to securing for blacks emancipation and the same civil rights and privileges that white Americans enjoyed, he was not prepared to allow blacks to earn these on their own terms, based on their own interpretations of moral Christian action, and what they believed the conditions of their race and class warranted. Garrisonian rhetoric, tactics, and efforts in nonresistant, moral suasion were based on an idealization of Christ that contrasted with blacks' idealization of Biblical patriarchs, and denied that other men, white or black, had the right to construct their own, equally valid definitions of Christian manliness. Garrison's construction of Christian manliness set up a hierarchy of manly behavior which defined what was Christian and eternal in opposition to what was unchristian and, by implication, damnable.

In terms of Garrison's ideas about women's role and his work with women through abolitionist endeavors, historians have written prolifically about these issues and they continue to do so in significant, challenging ways. In this paper, however, I do not endeavor to focus on Garrison in terms of his

leadership among women and his ideas of femininity. Rather, my focus is to explore his ideas of nonresistant Christian manliness and to critically examine how these functioned to reinforce white patriarchy.

In my effort to examine Garrison's construction of Christian manliness, I will apply the nineteenth-century gender descriptors "manly" and "manliness." As Gail Bederman clearly defines in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race, 1880-1917*, until about 1890, the white middle class rarely used the term "masculine" to describe individual men. Instead, the term "manly" was used by the white middle class to describe admirable men, and connoted "the highest conceptions of what is noble in man or worthy of his manhood." Similarly, the white middle class commonly referred to all the traits they thought were agreeable and noble in men as constituting "manliness." Although Bederman attributes the terms "manly" and "manliness" to the white middle class, I will also be discussing how these terms were used by some northern blacks with the same positive connotation, but to advocate a different set of ideals for winning black men the same freedom, rights, and privileges enjoyed by white men.[10]

In this paper, Chapter One will be used to discuss the social context for the Garrisonian model of manly Christian nonresistance. The focus will be on northern white middle- and upper-class ideals of manliness and how these were related to the way Garrison idealized Christ as a model of manly Christian nonresistance. In addition to examining how Garrison aligned his leadership with that of Christ, I will discuss the ways in which Garrison attempted to undercut the leadership of powerful men uncritical of and responsible for slavery by casting them as unmanly and unchristian in various capacities.

[10] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 18.

In Chapter Two I will continue examining Garrison's ideal of manly Christian nonresistance by analyzing the ways in which it denied black agency, problematized slave rebellion, and was more advantageous for whites as a position and as a practice. In spite of this, I will show ways in which white abolitionists and, especially, free and enslaved blacks proved their agency by pursuing their own alternative visions of manly Christian resistance. I will also describe the waning influence of the Garrisonian ideal of manly Christian nonresistance among whites, and the faltering impact of that ideal among black abolitionists. Finally, in the conclusion I will review the Garrisonian construction of manly Christian nonresistance in terms of how it both resisted and reinforced patterns of white, male, Protestant domination.

CHAPTER I

MANLY SELF-IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SALVATION OF THE SLAVE

In order to ground William Lloyd Garrison's ideals of Christian manliness within his social context, I will examine white middle- and upper-class ideals of manliness in the North and South, and how these related to idealizations of Christ by the northern white comfortable classes. Furthermore, I will explain how controversy over whether to use physical and armed resistance to end slavery centered around men's idealized role of being providers and protectors. Finally, I will explore how Garrison attempted to show that his leadership and support for nonresistant moral suasion was Christlike and manly, in contrast to proslavery forces such as clergymen and southern planters whom he cast in varying capacities to appear unchristian and unmanly.

As the growing number of studies on manliness in nineteenth-century America indicate, when industrialism developed in the antebellum North and plantation agriculture persisted in the South, northern and southern ideals of manliness upheld by the comfortable classes of whites increasingly diverged. Unlike northern middle- and upper-class whites, Southern whites of comparable status persisted in upholding an aristocratic ethos, a chivalric and heroic code of manly behavior which stressed commitment and usefulness to family and community, but also permitted men to indulge in vices that the

northern white comfortable classes now condemned.[11] Nina Silber notes that unlike Northern men, Southern men, especially Southern gentlemen, showed disdain for capitalistic enterprise, boasted of their fighting capacity, and made no pretense of their licentiousness. The differing regional ideals of manliness gained broader regional appeal as northerners and southerners applied them in gendered arguments over the larger, emerging conflict of slavery.[12]

In contrast to the South, the North's increasing industrialism fostered emphasis on individual effort and the free-labor ethos in which men could earn social and economic respectability by being self-disciplined. As Anthony Rotundo argues, in the early nineteenth century, the new ethos of the aspiring white man was "self," and this meant achieving respectability through individual effort, restraint, and self-control. Furthermore, he suggests that the widespread evangelical movement, which encouraged converts to prove their salvation by reforming themselves and their society, reinforced industrialism's emphasis on manly self-improvement. Evangelicals translated their message of reform into a call for men to practice "strong moral and religious habits," a message which also bolstered a strong industrial work ethic. This message was reinforced by evangelical women reformers' temperance efforts aimed at ending drunkenness and abusiveness in men, as well as licentiousness linked with prostitution.[13]

Amidst the manly focus on brains rather than brawn, Rotundo notes there

[11] Silber, "Intemperate Men," especially 617-619; Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender"; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*), 18; Elliott J. Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch": The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (February 1985): 18-43; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[12] Silber, "Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis," 617-619.

[13] Anthony Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920." *Journal of Social History* 16 (1983): 25; Silber, "Intemperate Men," 617.

was less emphasis on men's bodies; comfortable white northerners' emphasis on "self-made wealth and salvation" allowed "little room for a warrior ethic" which glorified a formidable physique and an honorable history of fighting. Yet in terms of a fighting spirit, Rotundo claims that "the northern men who spoke the language of battle with the greatest fervor were not soldiers—they were evangelicals and reformers . . . but their armor was the armor of spiritual righteousness and their weapons were the weapons of missionary zeal. Northern men sought to temper their souls and their minds, not their bodies." In terms of talk about men's bodies, literate antebellum northern whites discussed concerns in their letters and diaries about men's and boys' need to control their sexual impulse, abstain from strong drink, breathe fresh air, maintain a healthy diet, and exercise. Yet this focus on the body emphasized self-control and moderation rather than physical prowess.[14]

In order to promote emancipation, Garrisonian abolitionists portrayed Southern slavery as a threat to dominant northerners' notions of manliness.[15] They drew attention to the ways in which slavery prevented black men from upholding white middle- and upper-class northern ideals of manliness—"independence, industry, aggression, and accomplishment," as well as "sexual purity"—traits which would allow them to command "respect, status, and authority."[16] Garrisonian abolitionists protested that unlike northern men, black men were prevented by southern slaveholding men from being responsible husbands and fathers and sometimes even from retaining the physical organs of a man. According to their whim slaveholders might force slave men to separate from their wives or betrothed, order them to accept

[14] Rotundo, "Body and Soul," 26.
[15] In "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," Hoganson argues that that Garrisonian abolitionists deflected criticism about their own radical support for unconventional gender ideals by decrying the degendering of black men by white planters.
[16] Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," 563.

arranged marriages, subject them to public beatings, make them stand by or carry out the abuse of slave women and children, and even "punish" them with castration. Although Garrison objected to the way slaveholders denied black men the right to protect themselves and their families, he claimed that it would be unchristian to advise or assist them to use physical or armed force against their masters. Instead, Garrison suggested that northern black and white abolitionists should use moral suasion, strong persuasive arguments, to convince proslavery forces to recognize the sin of slavery and support immediate emancipation.

In keeping with white abolitionists' gendered criticism of slavery's effect on black men, black men decried their lack of rights to be men and to fulfill their role as protector and provider. Furthermore, they discussed their right to use moral suasion and violence for securing rights in terms of proving their manliness. As James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton note, when black men allied themselves with William Lloyd Garrison in the 1830s, some of them joined him in refusing to use force to secure rights for free and enslaved blacks. By doing so they attempted to work with their white supporters and "prove their worth and loyalty as Americans by accepting and obeying the government."[17] However, most blacks did not deny their right to self-defense, and by the 1840s, blacks increasingly operated independently of white abolitionist societies and were more outspoken about their view that force, and not just moral suasion, was needed to end slavery. From blacks' early efforts in the 1830s to collaborate with white abolitionists, there was always a black voice suggesting that black men should fight for their rights because their very manhood was at

[17] Horton and Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood," 132.

stake.[18]

Through white abolitionists' emphasis on black men's lack of manly rights to act as protectors and providers, and through controversial black abolitionists' appeals for manly resistance, arguments over force and nonresistance among abolitionists figured as arguments about manly behavior. It was in this context that William Lloyd Garrison joined fellow abolitionists in claiming Christ as his role model, and in declaring nonresistant moral suasion as the most manly, Christian means for promoting emancipation.

Garrison not only urged men and women to submit to the teachings of the male figureheads of Christ and the heavenly Father by supporting abolitionism, but he urged them to be like Christ and apply moral suasion to the point of meeting violent opposition with physical submission. Underlining Christ's mission to save humanity, Garrison denied that abolitionists had the right to use violence to achieve emancipation. He proposed that the punitive law, "AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH," upheld in the Old Testament, "has been abrogated by JESUS CHRIST; and that, under the new covenant, the forgiveness instead of the punishment of enemies has been enjoined upon all his disciples, in all cases whatsoever."[19] Garrison's call for moral suasion and physical submission was a problematic role for antebellum men to emulate but less so for women. The role of moral suasionist he upheld echoed white middle-class women's idealized role as the moral guardians of society who applied feminine persuasion and moral superiority to ensure that men and children adhered to Christian principles. Submission, physical or otherwise, was idealized as the proper role of women in their relationships with men. The

[18] See Horton and Horton's "The Affirmation of Manhood," for highlights on calls for manly resistance by black abolitionists such as David Walker, Maria Stewart, Henry Highland Garnet, and David Ruggles.
[19] Declaration of Sentiments Adopted by the Peace Convention, Boston, 28 September 1838, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery,* 103.

prevailing notion of genteel womanhood was what Barbara Welter has termed "The Cult of True Womanhood." As Welter explains:

> The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues–piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife–woman.[20]

Garrison's idealization of Christ followed a prevailing, "feminized" idealization of Christ and God in the antebellum years, reconstructed by not only radical Shakers, Mormons, and Christian Scientists, but by Unitarians, Congregationalists, and revivalists. As Mary De Jong argues with lyrical illustrations of antebellum hymnody, the early nineteenth-century Christ was a kind of "sensitive, humble savior who loves mankind, sacrifices personal power, suffers without complaining," and was "envisioned by a culture repelled by the inscrutable patriarch of Calvinism."[21] In terms of being a more feminine Christ, De Jong explains that the image of a sympathetic, compassionate, pure, and suffering Christ was more connected with ideals of femininity; this in part explains antebellum churches' increased appeal to women and reflection of women's influence, especially since "from the 1840s onward, American culture insisted on female inferiority in all realms but domesticity and piety." Yet in terms of reflecting traditional interpretations of male dominance, De Jong notes that through hymns and other messages, church-going Christians "received constant reiteration of the contradictory principles that power resides with God, Christ, and other males, and that the gentleness, purity, and generosity commonly associated with "femininity" are Christ-like. Furthermore, in terms of

[20] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18 (1966):96.
[21] Mary De Jong ""I Want to Be Like Jesus": The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (1986): 472-473.

masculine imagery, there was the notion of Christian soldiers and Christian warfare.[22]

Although Southern papers mocked abolitionist men as "men of talk and not of action," and portrayed abolitionist men's inclusion of women as unmanly dependence on women, Garrison hardly allowed his support and practice of non-resistant principles and moral suasion to be construed as feminine.[23] Through his use of aggressive language and the rhetoric of Christian warfare, he attempted to show that moral suasion, like the masculine use of violent, physical aggression, was an expression of manly courage, strength, and bravery. He was careful to assert that nonresistance did not mean passive inaction but rather strength of feeling and moral principle manifested in bold persuasive argument.[24] Furthermore, although Garrison identified with the "feminized" character of Christ, he also compared his leadership with the powerful male Christian figureheads of God, Christ, and Christian prophets and apostles.

Part of the manly vision of abolitionism that Garrison projected included a reconstructed image of Christ as the strong, militant leader of abolitionism. Garrison resisted allowing Christ to be perceived as a weak pacifist ruled by compassion, admonishing other abolitionists: "The Prince of Peace is the Captain of our Salvation, let us not falter nor tire in this glorious strife of truth and justice, but remain faithful unto death. 'For God hath not given us a spirit of

[22] De Jong, "'I Want to Be Like Jesus,'" 476; Rotundo, "Body and Soul," 26.
[23] Nina Silber, "Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis," 619.
[24] My interpretation of Garrison's construction of gender through religion concurs with David S. Reynolds view that "In its endorsement of reform, perfectibility, and soldierly endeavor [American] religion of this period [nineteenth century] tended to be 'masculine' or 'feminist.' In its advocacy of benevolence and emotion it tended to be 'feminine.'" David S. Reynolds, "Memoranda and Documents: The Feminization Controversy: Sexual Stereotypes and the Paradoxes of Piety in Nineteenth-Century America." *The New England Quarterly* 53 (1980):101.

fear; but of power, and of love and of sound mind."[25] If Christ, the Son of God, was their pacifist captain, Garrison assured abolitionists that Jehovah, God the Father, was their protector. Confident that God and Christian principles would ultimately prevail, Garrison optimistically predicted: "Having none but JEHOVAH for our strength and shield, our rock and refuge. . . . *Victory is as sure as that God reigns*. Man was not made to be a slave."[26]

Since Garrison championed a heroic but pacific construction of Christ , he validated and associated his role with this image. He addressed fellow abolitionists as a commander to his troops, men and women alike, in keeping with his view that women's role was just as essential as men's role in abolitionism. Upon the death of Ann Green Chapman, a white abolitionist in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, he mourned: "We have just met with a very severe loss to our cause in the death of Ann G. Chapman . . . We could have better spared five hundred women in our ranks."[27] In 1833, when abolitionism was attracting greater support, but still widely rejected, Garrison attempted to fortify the spirits of abolitionists by offering these encouraging words:

> We have ceased to be insignificant in numbers—in devotion and courage we are unsurpassed—our moral strength is might—daily additions are made to our ranks. . . . Our banner is floating over many a citadel, in various States—much territory has been conquered, and nothing lost.[28]

[25] WLG to the Patrons of *The Liberator* and the Friends of Abolition, 11 October 1833, *Letters*, 1:265. Printed in *The Liberator*, 12 October 1832.
[26] WLG to Harrison Gray Otis, 5 September 1835, *Letters*, 1:503. Printed in *The Liberator*, 5 September 1835.
[27] WLG to George W. Benson, Boston, 3 April 1837, *Letters*, 2:252; Ann G. Chapman was the sister of Henry Grafton Chapman, Maria W. Chapman's husband, *Letters*, 2:4. Hersh notes that abolitionists called Maria Weston Chapman "Captain Chapman," as testimony to her efficient but domineering manner in abolitionist endeavors. However, they also called her "Garrison's chief lieutenant," which I would note still affirmed that Garrison was the captain. Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 11.
[28] WLG to the Patrons of *The Liberator* and the Friends of Abolition, [11 October 1833], 1:264.

Through his metaphors of victory flags and territory won, Garrison attempted to offer bold moral and spiritual visions that would convince white Northerners and Southerners to support immediate emancipation. He was not alone in his use of militant metaphors. Rotundo contends that "northern men who spoke the language of battle with the greatest fervor were . . . evangelicals and reformers." Nevertheless, in keeping with northern white middle- and upper-class notions of manly physical self-restraint rather than physical prowess, Garrison and other antebellum reformers were not soldiers; they were men who sought to use the "armor of spiritual righteousness" and the weapons of "missionary zeal" to temper their minds, purge the nation, and ensure their souls.[29]

Garrison defended his use of harsh, critical language to denounce slavery and admonished others to do likewise by comparing his language to the bold, manly words of Christ and Christian patriarchs. To justify making denunciations of those who refused to advocate immediate emancipation, Garrison suggested that abolitionists needed to look no further than the Bible: "Look at the language of the patriarchs and prophets, of Christ and the apostles! . . . we are authorized to imitate the conduct of 'holy men of old,' in rebuking and warning those who are led into error."[30] In *The Liberator* he urged that as slavery endured and increased, the outcry against it also needed to be as forceful and strong as a man:

> Starve not your epithets against slavery, through fear or parsimony: let them be heavy, robust and powerful. It is a waste of politeness to be courteous to the devil . . . The language of reform is always severe—unavoidably severe; and simply because crime has grown monstrous and endurance has

[29] Rotundo, "Body and Soul," 26.

[30] WLG to Gerrit Smith, [31 January 1835], *Letters*, 1:438. Printed in *The Liberator*, 31 January 1835.

> passed its bounds.[31]

Garrison also deemed unabashed confrontation necessary to capture the attention of individuals and wake their consciences to the immorality of slavery. He defended his direct style as not only requisite but manly:

> It is impossible to arraign transgression without implicating the transgressor . . . . Besides it is far more *manly* to say, face to face, without circumlocution or equivocation, 'Thou art the man!' than to deal in subtle insinuations and dark imputations.[32]

It is significant to note that Garrison's militant, confrontational rhetoric was effective because it was provocative and difficult to ignore. On the one hand, abolitionists were not uncritical of Garrison's harsh speech. As a speaker admitted at the fifth annual meeting of the Massachusetts' Anti-Slavery Society in 1837, "We do not all feel perfectly pleased with *all* Mr. Garrison says. Like Martin Luther, his language is rough." Yet on the other hand, Garrison's harsh words for immediate emancipation were admirable because they were revolutionary. As the speaker also affirmed, "Mr. Garrison has the power of speaking in thunder-tones—he has spoken—he has waked up the nation. In defense of Garrison and other outspoken critics of slavery, the speaker suggested that only

> [m]en of natural softness and timidity, of a sincere but effeminate virtue, will be apt to look on these bolder, hardier spirits, as violent, perturbed, and uncharitable. . . . But that deep feeling of evils . . . which marks God's most powerful messengers to mankind, cannot breathe itself in soft and tender accents. The deeply moved soul will speak strongly, and ought to speak so as to move and shake

[31] WLG to *The Liberator*, Liverpool, 23 May 1833, *Letters*, 1:229-30. Printed in *The Liberator*, 6 July 1833.

[32] WLG to Gerrit Smith, [31 January 1835], *Letters*, 1:437. (emphasis added)

nations.[33]

Even after 1839, when many blacks turned from Garrison's leadership to develop their own, many of them continued to honor Garrison as the first white man who gave them a provocative voice among whites for advocating immediate emancipation. For example, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a black Canadian editor, bemoaned the lack of a manly voice such as Garrison's to speak out in 1861 against the effort to encourage Canada West blacks to emigrate to Haiti. Applying militant rhetoric herself, she lamented:

> Once upon a time brave men and women, with a bugle-blast of indignation, spoke out against wrong when it was perpetrated against black men, at the risk of the halter. I have a dim recollection of one noble man called William Lloyd Garrison in such peril. Why cannot there be a strong and manly voice now?[34]

As for white northern clergymen, most refused to speak out against slavery. In contrast to the many black clergymen leaders in abolitionism, most white northern clergymen opposed or distanced themselves from Garrison and northern abolitionists up to a decade and a half before the Civil War.[35] White northern clergymens' refusal to even discuss slavery was motivated by their desire to avoid broaching a controversial issue that could divide their churches, cause members to secede, and lead to a drain on church monies. In spite of abolitionists' demands that northern churches bar slaveholding members from church in the same way churches excluded habitual drunkards, adulterers, and thieves, only the Quakers, Freewill Baptists, and most Scottish Presbyterian

[33] "Proceedings of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, at Its Fifth Annual Meeting, Boston, January 25, 1837," *First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society*, xxxiii, xxxiv, 6.

[34] In this passage, Cary alludes to a mob's attack and effort to hang Garrison in 1840. Mary Ann Shadd Cary to Robert Hamilton, Chatham, C[anada] W[est],17 September 1861, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 2:452.

[35] For black clergymen's critical role in abolitionism, see "Pulpit and Press," chapter 3 of Benjamin Quarles' *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 68-89.

sects chose to do so by the early 1840s. Yet even these latter sects reflected most northern denominations in their refusal to join the antislavery campaigns of the 1830s and 1840s.[36] As for the Methodist and Baptist churches, even after experiencing sectional schisms over slavery in 1844 and 1845, neither denomination moved to adopt an uncompromising antislavery standard. Most antislavery churches and mission societies were founded by abolitionists who had seceded from churches, including New and Old School Presbyterian, Unitarian, and Congregationalist churches, that refused to declare slaveholding a sin and exclude slaveholding members. As for white southern clergymen, up to the Civil War most of them tolerated slavery; many of them were actively involved in using the Bible to validate slavery and justify denying rights to slaves.[37]

To challenge the power of the clergy which boasted the American societal norms of being both Christian and patriarchal, Garrison interpreted white clergymen's refusal to support immediate emancipation as a sign of feminine weakness and a lack of spiritual conviction. By vilifying "effeminacy" in clergymen, he sustained the notion that masculinity is superior to femininity. Furthermore, by using "effeminacy" as an epithet, Garrison may have been betraying homophobia, since "effeminacy" was a euphemism for homosexuality during the nineteenth century.[38] Garrison attacked the potency of the white clergy and lamented that "the Christianity of our times is so effeminate, calculating, timid, and corrupt . . . . We must have a race of men who will be bold

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[36] Northern churches that refused to join antislavery campaigns should not be confused with northern church members or former church members who individually joined abolitionism.
[37] McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion*, 90-91, 161-163, 178-181; Caroline L. Shanks, "The Biblical Antislavery Argument of the Decade, 1830-1840" *Journal of Negro History* 16 (1931):132-57, anthologized in *Religion and Slavery*, Articles on American Slavery, vol 16, Paul Finkelman, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989).
[38] Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 8,112n.

for God, and open-mouthed and trumpet-tongued for his truth in the face of death."[39] In response to William Ellery Channing's book *Slavery*, he criticized this leading Unitarian minister for using soft, evasive terms to discuss slavemasters' abusive treatment and buying and selling of slaves as chattel. Furthermore, he called a ministerial review of *Slavery*, "namby-pamby, fiddle-faddle," for suggesting the book was admirable because it avoided exciting any "bad passions" and divisions over the issue of slaveholding.[40]

Garrison was hardly alone in attacking the manhood of ministers, since the public stereotyped the profession of clergymen suited for society's "pallid, puny, sedentary, lifeless, joyless," effeminate men.[41] Evangelical clergymen themselves rejected this negative stereotype as one of the vestiges of strict Calvinist doctrine. The prominent nineteenth-century evangelical preacher Henry Ward Beecher, son of the eminent Presbyterian clergyman Lyman Beecher, regretted:

> When we undertake to make perfect moral men according to the prevailing idea, they are so dry, so precise, so rigid, so afraid of evil, and so distrustful of themselves, that we take pretty much all the color out of their cheek, and pretty much all the throb out of their heart, and pretty much all the vim out of their hand, and pretty much all the wildness and freedom out of their foot, and leave them with scarcely any of those elements which make them agreeable companions in life. And it is often said, 'That man is spoiled by religion.'[42]

Rather than affect meekness, Garrison offered to challenge any man who doubted the justification of abolitionism. In *The Liberator*, he brandished a

[39] WLG to George Benson, Boston, 12 January 1835, *Letters*, 1:435.
[40] WLG to Samuel J. May, Brooklyn, 5 December 1835, *Letters*, 1:572.
[41] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Saints and Their Bodies," cited in Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformation in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993),172.
[42] Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1872), 178.

variation of the language of a Christian soldier by issuing invitations to spar verbally, man-to-man over the moral correctness of abolitionism.
For example, to a man who refused to engage him in public debate yet persisted in criticizing abolitionism, he addressed the following notice: Mr. Danforth . . . he can strut, and talk big, and make bold assertions, where he has no opponent–but that he has not the moral courage to face an open contest . . . let him desist from bush-fighting, and enter the arena with an old soldier." As Garrison expressed it, manly courage consisted of moral not physical strength. He concluded his notice using the masculine metaphor of a fighting match: "No evasion, no trimming, no flight will be allowed: the champion must be chained to his post."[43]

Since Garrison defined manliness in terms of exhibiting moral Christian strength and Christlike nonresistance, he constructed slaveholders as unchristian, violent, morally weak men who were controlled by their selfish, sensual desires. As he described them, slaveholders only appeared to be men:

> Through wickedness, stupidity, or baseness of spirit, [they] seem to have degenerated into the worst of beasts, and to have retained nothing of men but the outward shape, or the ability of doing those mischiefs which they have learnt from their master the devil.[44]

Instead of demonstrating chivalry and bodily self-discipline, slaveholders raped slave women, abused slave children, and made them toil inordinantly; they denied slave men any of the rights entitled to white men and which could identify them as manly. In an age when the white middle- and upper-class increasingly measured manliness in terms of self-made wealth and when poverty was treated as a personal failure and crime, Garrison's attack on

[43] *The Liberator*, 2 February 1833.
[44] Garrison to Joseph Gales and William W. Seaton, [23 September 1831], *Letters*, 1:132. Printed in *The Liberator*, 15 October 1831.

slavery challenged the very core of southern planters' manhood–their livelihood. Rather than being hard-working self-made men, slaveholders, Garrison said, were thieves who stole the labor and even the offspring of blacks. He denied it was "'decent honest employment'" for slaveholders "to reduce the creatures of God to a level with brutes . . . to steal, day after day, month after month, year after year, the fruits of their unmitigated toil."[45] In extreme terms, Garrison contended that slaveholding men were nothing less than animalistic "cannibals" who devoured the flesh of slaves by working them to death.[46]

In contrast to slaveholders, Garrison showed that he championed the manliness of slave men and the womanliness of slave women and was willing to defend both. He remonstrated,"If you are not anti-slavery, then you are for concubinage, pollution, robbery, cruelty . . . then you are for setting aside the forms and obligations of marriage."[47] If he as a man felt sympathy for slave women's condition, Garrison argued that white women, endowed with a sympathetic nature, should feel even greater compassion for their slave sisters. In stark terms he persuasively appealed:

> Oh if the shrieks could reach our ears which are constantly rising to heaven from the bosom of some bleeding wife or ruined daughter at the South, we should shudder and turn pale, and make new resolutions to seek their deliverance. Women of New England . . . If my heart bleeds over the degraded and insufferable condition of a large portion of your sex, how ought you, whose sensibility is more susceptible than the windharp, to weep, and speak, and act, in their behalf?[48]

Even more provocative than Garrison's vision of abolition as the manly effort to defend slave women was his projection of himself as Christ incarnate.

[45] WLG to the Editor of the Boston *Evening Transcript*, 6 November 1830, *Letters*, 1:112. Printed in the Boston *Evening Transcript*, 8 November 1830.
[46] Garrison to Gales and Seaton, [23 September 1831], *Letters*, 1:131.
[47] WLG to Isaac Knapp, Providence, 19 November 1835, *Letters*, 1:558.
[48] WLG to Harriet Plummer, Boston, 4 March 1833, *Letters*, 1:209.

In spite of his denial of the manliness of proslavery clergymen and slaveholding men, Garrison claimed to forgive as Christ forgave: "All my enemies I freely pardon, and . . . use the language of the expiring Son of God–'Father forgive them: they know not what they do.'"[49] At times he likened his relationship with black and white abolitionists to that of Christ with his followers. After visiting a group of black abolitionists, he remarked, "They wept freely–they clustered around me in throngs, each one eager to receive the pressure of my hand and implore Heaven's choicest blessings upon my head." By casting himself as the crucified but forgiving Christ, or Christ the man who could heal by the touch of his hand, Garrison implicitly suggested that he had the authority and perfection attributed to Christ. What is more, Garrison encouraged others to compare him with Christ, since he consistently applied allusions to Christ in reference to himself rather than other black and white abolitionists. Before the 1840 American Anti-Slavery Society split over Garrisonian inclusion of women, support for nonresistant moral suasion, and other issues and positions, abolitionists compared themselves to early Christian apostles and lauded Garrison as their latter-day savior. White and black abolitionists, male and female, expressed their reverence and affection for Garrison with what Donald Yacovone has termed "the language of fraternal love," endearments which can be traced to the early Christians' passionate greetings that affirmed a common bond in Christ and a commitment to love one another. With spiritual devotion some of them called him "Father Garrison."[50]

Based on examination of William Lloyd Garrison's use of the language of

[49] WLG to Plummer, *Letters*, 1:207.
[50] Donald Yacovone, "Abolitionists and the 'Language of Fraternal Love,'" in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, eds. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990): 86-89; for notes on abolitionists' perception of WLG as a fatherlike messiah, see Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 51-54.

Christian warfare, his support for Christ-like submission, and his denial of proslavery men's Christian manliness, Garrison can be viewed as both challenging and reinforcing antebellum, white middle- and upper-class notions of manliness. He made abolitionism a manly enterprise by describing it in terms of Christian warfare, but his advocacy of the "weapon" of moral suasion rather than physical or armed resistance underscored the feminine ideal of submission and role of moral guardian, as well as the manly focus on inner "self" rather than "body." By casting himself as the beloved Christ, Garrison offered the powerful implication that his judgments were sacred, exemplary, and authoritative. Yet Garrison's assumption that he had the authority to define what is Christian and manly and unchristian and unmanly was paternalistic; it denied that other abolitionists, especially black abolitionists and slaves, had the right to claim alternate visions and practices of Christian manliness.

CHAPTER II

MANLY CHRISTIAN NONRESISTANCE: "IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON"

By constructing nonresistant moral suasion as the only manly, Christian means for winning immediate emancipation and civil rights for blacks, Garrison denied that other men, black or white, could be as manly and Christian as he was unless they complied with his views and judgments. In this chapter, I will begin by explaining Garrison's nonresistance principles in the context of nineteenth-century evangelical millenialist and perfectionist thought, his basis and motives for these, and what they implied for whites and blacks in practice. I will continue by discussing Garrison's defense of nonresistance principles in terms of a christian-unchristian dichotomy, and the significance of the ways in which he based nonresistance on New Testament rather than Old Testament scripture. While controversy over the principles and practices of nonresistance involved white and black men and women abolitionists, abolitionists often discussed nonresistance in terms of men's duty–to protect their families, to fight as soldiers, and for black men to prove their manhood rather than their subservience to white men. I will argue that by upholding nonresistance as the most manly and the most Christian means for effecting emancipation, Garrison denied black agency, problematized slave rebellion, and offered a position and a practice that was more advantageous for white abolitionists. In spite of Garrison's views and influence, I will show the ways in which some abolitionists, especially free and enslaved blacks, proved their agency by pursuing their own

alternative visions of manly Christian resistance.

For Garrison, nonresistance was inextricably tied with his interpretations of Jesus Christ, the divine patriarchal figure who absorbed the attention of nineteenth-century evangelicals. Northern antebellum evangelicals believed that individuals proved they were followers of Christ through their actions, and so their passionate discussions about what constituted Christian or unchristian behavior were efforts to define what actions would lead to eternal blessing or eternal damnation. Within the evangelical movement were millenialism and perfectionism, two growing theological movements. Millenialists taught that others could be part of establishing God's future kingdom on earth by participating in Christian efforts to reform the world. Perfectionists taught that one should maintain uncompromising personal moral standards to set an example for and challenge individuals and institutions that tolerated evils such as slavery.[51] Through his leadership in abolitionist societies, such as the American Anti-Slavery Society and the American Peace Society, Garrison advocated nonresistant means with arguments that reflected both millenialist and perfectionist thought. Garrison's nonresistance stance, as he expressed it in the 1831 Prospectus of *The Liberator*, was that "offensive or defensive" resistance "is contrary to the precepts and example of Jesus Christ . . . no professor of Christianity should march to the battlefield."[52] In the 1838 "Declaration of Sentiments" which he drew up for the American Peace Society, a nonresistance society, Garrison offered a pledge which combined nonresistance with millenialist thought:

> But, while we shall adhere to the doctrines of non-resistance and passive submission to enemies, we purpose, in a moral and spiritual sense, to speak and act boldly in the cause of God . . . and to hasten the

[51] McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion*, 20-21

[52] WLG to Gales and Seaton, [c. 23 Sept. 1831], *Letters*, 1:131.

> time, when the Kingdoms of this world will have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever.[53]

In keeping with perfectionist principles, Garrison personally remained committed to his nonresistance principles, even throughout the Civil War.

Although most abolitionists abandoned their commitment to nonresistant means alone by 1839, Garrison resolutely held to nonresistance. He was consistent in his rhetoric and in his actions in that he never advocated violent means to end slavery in his writings or speeches, nor did he resort to violence when confronted violently. Yet it is important to make the distinction that whenever whites and blacks participated in slave uprisings, Garrison never condemned them. He felt that to do so would be to express solidarity with slaveholders who condemned and punished slave uprisings. Besides diverging from most abolitionists by upholding nonresistance, Garrison upheld a number of other unorthodox views. He would not vote or hold a political office in a government that included slaveholders. He was an anti-Sabbatarian, contending that no day warranted sacred observation over any other, except because of superstitious tradition.[54] In standing by these and other unpopular views in the cause of immediate emancipation, Garrison's displayed remarkable tenacity which he attributed to his desire to please God and earn His eternal blessing. In one of many letters, Garrison expressed that in his actions he was more afraid of failing to please God than of failing to please those around him. When pleasing others meant displeasing God, Garrison opined that he might earn temporal acceptance on earth but eternal damnation from God:

[53] "Declaration of Sentiments" adopted by the (American) Peace Convention, held in Boston, 18-20 September 1838, Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Cited in Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994): 289.

[54] For Garrison's unorthodox views, see Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 43.

> I am anxious to please the people; but if, in order to do so, I must violate the plainest precepts of the gospel, and disregard the most solemn obligations, will the people see that my name is written in the Book of Life, and that my sins are blotted out of the Book of Rememberance? If they cannot, I must obey the voice from Heaven, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.[55]

In weighing the motives and reasons which influenced Garrison's call for Christian nonresistance, it is important to consider whether Garrison adapted this position for his own safety. Conspiring with slaves to rebel was comparable to inciting a race war, and anyone who did so could expect a fatal response from whites opposed to immediate emancipation. Garrison himself acknowledged that if he urged revolts, his days as an abolitionist leader would be numbered. If, like the English abolitionist Algernon Sydney, he justified "every slave in 'cutting his master's throat,'" Garrison estimated that "thousands will be ready to stone me, who would be quite as prompt to suspend me upon a gibbet, if I should grant such a right impartially to the black man as well as the white!"[56]

Although nonresistant, moral suasion strategies and tactics were more practicable for northern whites who had more civil rights and protections than blacks, it would be unreasonable to argue that Garrison upheld nonresistance principles to ensure his own protection. Nonresistance could hardly be considered an adequate tactic or strategy for a white leader of a highly unpopular cause. In spite of the fact that Garrison relied only on nonviolent means, he received threatening notices, faced a price on his head in the South, and endured mobs that threw brickbats and even prepared to hang him, until a

[55] WLG to Plummer, *Letters*, 1:207.
[56] WLG to the Editor of the Boston *Courier*, [11 March 1837], *Letters*, 2:228. Printed in *The Liberator*, 11 March 1837.

sheriff "saved" him by putting him in jail.[57] Although Garrison often expressed concerns about his own and his family's health and happiness, it is apparent that he defended nonresistance in terms of his desire to protect personal moral integrity. In keeping with his pledge to the pacific sentiments of the American Anti-Slavery Society's constitution and Declaration of Sentiments, he implied that he could not justifiably resort to weapons, even if his own wife and daughter were "put in jeopardy by 'the most brutal'!"[58] Defending one's physical safety did not count for anything in Garrison's framework of manliness. What mattered was fulfilling one's Christian duty by dying a nonresistant martyr in the manner of Christ. As Garrison was apt to remind abolitionists in the aftermath of a mob attack on one of their meetings: "To reign with Christ, we must be crucified to the world; to save our lives we must lose them; to preserve and enlarge our reputation, we must sacrifice it for righteousness' sake."[59]

For whites in general, they had less at stake than blacks if they chose to follow Christian nonresistance. In terms of real-life consequences, whites who supported abolitionism faced grim reprisals, but these were not as frequent or as violent as those endured by black abolitionists. Whites who supported antislavery were less subject to violent backlash than blacks who endured discrimination on a daily basis simply because of their color. White abolitionists commonly suffered "professional and occupation punishments," and were overlooked for admission, hiring, and promotion by prestigious societies, colleges, and churches. They also had their persons and civil rights violated, "but the greatest number, by far, of those politically victimized, jailed, deported, lashed, lynched, executed, were black men and women, mostly slaves or

[57] For examples of incidents, see *Letters*, 1:131, 529; 2:227.
[58] WLG to the Editor of the *Emancipator*, [31 May 1839], *Letters*, 2:481. Printed in *The Liberator*, 28 June 1839.
[59] WLG to William H. Scott, The Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, *Letters*, 2:87. Printed in *The Liberator*, 4 June 1836.

fugitive slaves, but also a significant number of free blacks."[60] Almost all black abolitionist leaders were propertyless. White abolitionist leaders, with exceptions such as Garrison, tended to be well-to-do and enjoy the privileges and protections of their class, and of course their race.[61] White male leaders and black women were also afforded protection by white female abolitionists. White female abolitionists had a restraining effect on mobs because white women were idealized in the antebellum period as the keepers' of the hearth, unfit for the strains of public activities. By walking with Garrison or linking arms with black women, white female abolitionists provided protection from mob violence.[62] Given blacks' subordinate position in society, Garrison's call for manly Christian nonresistance demanded more of blacks than of whites and did not allow blacks active, practical means for escaping harsh treatment or capture.

Although Garrison judged violent means to be unmanly and unchristian in comparison to nonresistance, he publicly stated to that the choice of means to end slavery should be left a matter of personal discretion. Garrison tolerated abolitionists who supported violent and not just moral suasionist means, but he did not consider them equal to himself, a Christian nonresistant. By being in the nonresistant minority, Garrison confirmed his sense of possessing a rare religious fervency. In reality, Garrison had little choice but to tolerate dissonant views on nonresistance unless he was willing to cut himself off from the majority

[60] Herbert Aptheker, *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 94-95.
[61] Garrison grew up fatherless and poor. His father left his mother in 1808 when Garrison was three years old. His mother made a living by caring for rich women in their homes. As a boy Garrison was raised a Baptist by his mother and apprenticed unsuccessfully with various trades until he tried the print trade in 1818. He found the print trade satisfying and used it in his career devoted to abolitionism. See editor's remarks, *Letters*, 1:3-4. For abolitionist leaders' and supporters' socio-economic ties, see "Social Class, Labor, and Abolitionism," chapter four of Herbert Aptheker's *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*.
[62] Margaret Hope Bacon, "By Moral Force Alone: The Antislavery Women and Nonresistance," in Yellin, ed., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 282-283, 286-287.

of abolitionists. In 1838 the American Anti-Slavery Society in which Garrison served as a leader voted 44 to 19 against becoming a nonresistant antislavery society. From 1838 onward, support for nonresistance dwindled as abolitionists doubted that moral suasion could convince the South and the nation as a whole to accept immediate emancipation. In 1840 some white and black abolitionists split from the American Anti-Slavery Society and formed the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society because they objected to Garrison's leadership in terms of his support for nonresistance, as well as his anti-clerical, anti-government stance, and support for women's participation, among other things.[63] Throughout the 1840s, some abolitionist societies made statements comparable to the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society's 1840 announcement: 'We are an antislavery society–not a non-resistance society.'[64] Given the ebb in support for nonresistance, Garrison sought to maintain his pacific principles by joining others in establishing the New-England Non-Resistance Society, a peace society for which he wrote its "Declaration of Sentiments."

Although Garrison did not threaten to split with abolitionists by demanding commitment to nonresistance, his patronizing efforts to advocate nonresistance as the most Christian, manly means for securing emancipation reflected the patriarchal tendencies of white male abolitionist societies in New York. In comparing the male and female antislavery societies in New York, Amy Swerdlow argues that the constitutions of the female antislavery societies "exhibited far less racism and paternalism than the men's." While both the men's and women's societies were committed to elevating the character and conditions of blacks, the male New York City Anti-Slavery Society narrowly

[63] Historians note that various groups of members left for different reasons. See Martin B. Pasternak, *Rise Now and Fly to Arms: The Life of Henry Highland Garnet* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 26-27; Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 100-101.
[64] Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, Seventh Annual Report, 14 October 1840, cited in Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists,*101.

pledged to 'never countenance the oppressed in vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force.' In contrast, female groups such as the women of the Chatham Street Chapel society declared in their *Address to the Public*, "We would not join hypocrisy to persecution by *dictating* to them [free blacks and slaves] how they are to improve their character and their prospects."[65] I would agree with other historians that white male abolitionists such as Garrison may have sometimes been more patronizing towards blacks than white female abolitionists because unlike white women they did not lack rights based on sex which would help them to understand slaves lack of rights based on racism by whites, especially white slaveholding men.

In his attempt to elevate nonresistance over the use of physical or armed force, Garrison judged that only those who were nonresistants were Christian:

> I believe that doctrine [Non-Resistance] to be more comprehensive and glorious, more reconciling and redeeming, more philosophical and Christian, than any the world has known . . . Of course, it can neither be understood nor received by those who are led by the spirit of this world and the customs of the age . . .[66]

Regardless of what various religions might teach, Garrison believed that only "human selfishness" and "worldly policy," such as revolutionary principles, could justify war and the use of weapons. He would not say that those who refused to uphold nonresistant principles "lack religious feeling," but he suggested they were "not Christians," a judgment which spelled eternal damnation in evangelical Christian terms.[67]

Since Garrison upheld Christ as the supreme model of nonresistance, he rejected any interpretation of the Old Testament wars and revolutions that

[65] Cited in Amy Swerdlow, "Abolition's Conservative Sisters: The Ladies' New York City Anti-Slavery Societies, 1834-1840," in Yellin, ed., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 35-36.
[66] "Declaration of Sentiments." Cited in Yellin and Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood:* .
[67] WLG to Charles L. Corkran, Boston, 27 February 1842, *Letters*, 3:55.

advocated war. In this way he differed with many northern blacks who identified their struggle against white oppression and slavery with the Jewish battles for freedom and independence. Rather than celebrate the heroism of Old Testament, patriarchal leaders of liberation, Garrison urged abolitionists to emulate "the endurance of the man of UZ [Job], the faith of Gideon, the meekness of Moses, and the intrepidity of the youthful David."[68] Garrison suggested that Moses hardly commanded the same degree of attention since "Christ has superseded Moses, and now forbids all war."[69] He denied that the "exterminating" wars led by Old Testament patriarchs and Christ's successive message of long-suffering implied that God's moral character was mutable or inconsistent. Garrison quoted as literal truth sections of the Bible that seemed to support his position; however, he called into question the literal truth of scripture, especially portions of the Old Testament, that challenged his beliefs:

> Why should it [Bible] not be examined, criticized, and decided upon like any other book–according to its own intrinsic merits? All that is really good in it we should prize, and it will assuredly remain; whatever we discover in it to be either obsolete, erroneous, visionary, or contradicted by fact and experience, let us treat it accordingly.

For himself, Garrison determined that "God never sanctioned any of those exterminating wars and horrid cruelties recorded in the Old Testament and ascribed to him."[70] Some blacks also claimed the authority to interpret Scripture

[68] WLG to Samuel J. May, Brooklyn, 17 January 1836, *Letters*, 2:20. Printed in *The Liberator*, 23 January 1836.
[69] WLG to Elizabeth Pease, Boston, 20 June 1849, *Letters*, 3:632; Garrison expressed anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic sentiments which editor Louis Ruchames explains as reflecting a Christian view of Judaism and an almost Protestant fundamentalist view of Catholicism (eg. "O, the rottenness of Christendom! Judaism and Romanism are the leading features of Protestantism. . . the greater portion of professing Christian in this land . . . are Pharisees and Sadducees, they are Papists and Jews."), WLG to Samuel J. May, 23 September 1836, Brooklyn, *Letters*, 2:178, 179,n5. For additional anti-Semitic remarks by Garrison, see *Letters*, 2:247, 281, 316, and 320,n7a .
[70] WLG to Elizabeth Pease, *Letters*, 3:632.

critically, but in contrast to Garrison they came up with Biblical interpretations of Old Testament patriarchs and Jesus Christ that supported violent resistance.

Unlike Garrison, blacks identified with Old Testament patriarchs who did not hesitate to use physical means to defend themselves and to gain freedom from bondage or exile. They venerated Christ, but extolled Old Testament patriarchs for being revolutionaries who led their people out of slavery and exile. In keeping with antebellum evangelicals' feminized idealization of Christ, Sarah A. Lester, a mulatto daughter of a prominent black merchant in Victoria, Vancouver Island, claimed black men could prove they were manly by demonstrating the forgiving love of Christ. However, she coupled this with subversive slave theology that black men should also demonstrate the fighting spirit of David. Lester urged black men:

> I hope that we will prove our claims to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' by manly conduct, and let the enemy see that while as Christian soldiers, we can pray for those who despitefully use us, we can also, like David, beat them as small as the dust when they oppose the cause of God and human progress in the path of right.[71]

Similarly, in his call for slave resistance and insurrection, the black abolitionist and activist Henry Highland Garnet cited the Biblical Moses when he recounted revolutionaries of old, and noted the divine curse of plagues the Jews left behind when Moses led them out of slavery in Egypt.[72]

While rejecting violent resistance as "unchristian," Garrison often suggested that by practicing nonresistance, abolitionists could win eternal,

[71] Sarah A. Lester to William Still, 21 April 1863, Victoria, [Vancouver Island], *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 2:515; Lester alludes to Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:43-44 when she advises prayer for abusers. Lester was originally born a free mulatto in San Francisco, but left in January 1858 with her parents to Vancouver after her school was racially segregated and she was expelled. Lester called the U.S. returned to San Francisco after the Civil War, see 2:519,n8.
[72] Speech by Henry Highland Garnet, Delivered before the National Convention of Colored Citizens, Buffalo New York, 16 August 1843, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:409, 410.

heavenly bliss. Garrison's consolation to abolitionists was "if we are faithful unto death, there is a crown laid up for us in heaven." In terms of the threats and dangers abolitionists faced, Garrison compared these to the sufferings of Christ, but he assured abolitionists that by suffering they would win a more divine, lasting reward: "The ungodly and violent . . . may combine to crush us. So they treated the Messiah, whose example we are humbly striving to imitate. If we suffer with him, we know that we shall reign with him."[73] Garrison believed that only the most manly men would uphold Christian nonresistance, and regretted that only a few would do so to earn eternal glory, riches in heaven, and possibly even Christian martyrdom.

It is significant to note that Garrison did not offer slaves the same message of heavenly reward for practicing nonresistance that he extended to northern white and black abolitionists. Garrison's reticence about slaves' opportunity for heavenly reward suggests that like other evangelicals, he considered them damned until they had freedom to live by their own moral, Christian choices.[74] He commonly decried the system of slavery for reducing blacks to a population of heathens, if not "livestock and creeping things."[75] Rather than emphasize slaves' unchristian state, Garrison focused on the ways in which slaveholders forced them to live in unchristian ways. As a champion of the slave, Garrison would not portray slaves' unchristian state in condemnatory tones, but in terms that would excite others to offer sympathy and support for slaves' immediate emancipation. Garrison's passionate devotion to freeing the slaves can be explained by his desire to save their souls and his belief that

[73] Cain, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery: Selections from* The Liberator, 105.
[74] As McKivigan explains: "Evangelicalism taught that God had given every individual free will and moral ability but that slavery deprived its victims of the unhindered use of these powers and stood as an obstacle to salvation." *The War Against Proslavery Religion*, 21.
[75] See *Letters*, 2:35, 225, for Garrison's assertions that slavery put blacks on the level of property, beasts, and heathen.

slaves were spiritually damned under the system of slavery. Garrison's suggestions that slaves could not simultaneously be enslaved and Christian may be linked to his willingness to assume a paternalistic, moral and spiritual high ground by dictating nonresistance principles to slaves.

Through the nonresistant means of moral suasion alone, Garrison hoped to convert the entire nation to accept immediate emancipation and avert a race war which he feared would devastate both blacks and whites.[76] Garrison warned the nation that every day that slavery persisted, the number of slaves increased and so did their desire and capacity for violent revolution. In this way he cast the potential of slave revolt in horrifying rather than glorious terms. Even if nonresistant moral suasion failed to bring about emancipation, Garrison maintained it was the only Christlike means for effecting change. Even if it were the case that slave revolts were a more effective means for ending slavery, Garrison pledged that he would "never countenance" the slaves to vindicate their rights by resorting to physical force, "not, therefore, because it would be *inexpedient* to do so, to-day, next week, or peradventure next year–but because it would be *always* contrary to the will of God, to the spirit of the Gospel, and the example of Christ!"[77] As a leader, his commitment to pacifist principles and his claims that they defined manly Christian behavior ultimately put him at odds with most abolitionists and much of the black community, which largely abandoned hope in moral suasion alone by the 1840s.[78]

Whenever slaves revolted and southerners blamed Garrison for inciting

[76] WLG to Gales and Seaton, [c. 23 September 1831], *Letters*, 1:133; also see Robert H. Abzug, "The Influence of Garrisonian Abolitionists' Fears of Slave Violence on the Antislavery Argument, 1829-40," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (1970): 23.
[77] WLG to the Editor of the *Emancipator*, [31 May 1839], *Letters*, 2:479. Printed in *The Liberator*, 28 June1839.
[78] For notes on blacks divisions over nonresistance and most blacks' shift from moral suasion to armed resistance by the 1840s, see *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:49, 403; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 235.

them to violence with 'the incendiary *Liberator*,' he would deny that such violent sentiments could be found in his newspaper or in the "multitudinous publications of the American Anti-Slavery Society and its eight hundred auxiliaries." Rather, he would own that "[t]he *credit* of instigating the slaves to revolt belongs to the slaveholders".[79] Furthermore, he would suggest that all Americans unopposed to slavery were to blame, using rhetoric such as this: "Who, then, authorize and urge the slaves at the south to 'cut their masters' throats' without delay, as a religious and patriotic act? Why, the citizens of Boston! southern slaveholders! the American people!"[80] Due to the abuses they suffered, Garrison denied that slaves needed his provocation: "The slaves need no incentives . . . They will find them in their stripes,–in their emaciated bodies–in their ceaseless toil."[81]

Although Garrison put the motive and guilt for slave uprisings on slaveholders and their supporters and focused on God's retribution rather than slaves' agency in these rebellions, his message of nonresistance reinforced slaveholders' demands for slaves to submit, assigned slaves and northern blacks a passive role, and perpetrated the racist assumption that blacks were a feminine, servile race.[82] Garrison objected to the way the unjust system of slavery was such that slaves "may not shed a drop of their masters' blood," but slaves' "masters may shed *their* blood freely."[83] Yet in *The Liberator*, he told slaves to "be patient, long-suffering, and submissive, yet awhile longer–trusting

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[79] WLG to the Editor of the Boston *Courier*, 11 March 1837, *Letters*, 2:227-28. Printed in *The Liberator*, 11 March 1837. (emphasis in the original)
[80]Ibid, 2:226
[81] Cain, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery*, 82.
[82] A racist justification for American slavery was that blacks were a naturally dependent, inferior race and naturally subservient to whites (need note); At the same token, whites stereotyped black men as being less than human: "uncivilizable savages, prone to violence, restrained only by slavery." Horton and Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood," 132.
[83] WLG to the Editor of the Boston *Courier*, *Letters*, 2:227. Printed in *The Liberator*, 11 March 1837.

that, by the blessing of the Most High on their [abolitionists] labors, you will yet be emancipated without shedding a drop of your master's blood, or losing a drop of your own."[84] Garrison's latter extension of hope hardly connected with slaves' and fugitive northern blacks' unprovoked encounters with white abuse.[85] In effect, the role Garrison left for slaves and even northern blacks, was to allow themselves to be acted upon by whites. Although Garrison was ready to emancipate slaves and allow them the same civil rights and legal protections as whites, until they secured freedom and rights he expected them to act subservient to white southern slaveholders.[86] For northern black men who lacked civil rights and legal protections, Garrison's demand for nonresistance denied their visions of manliness because it asked them to follow a northern white man's advice and submit to white men's control. Overall, Garrison's message of nonresistance asked slaves and the black race as a whole to assume a "feminine" role in relation to the "masculine" white race, in the sense that it reflected the northern white antebellum ideal that women ought to submit to men. As Daniel C. Littlefield explains, "The attributes assigned to blacks [by whites] were also applied to women, and blacks and women were thus equated."[87]

The ways in which northerners' demands, such as Garrison's call for Christian nonresistance, reinforced slaveholders' demands for slaves' compliance was not lost on black men. Edward Scott, a former slave, refuted all northern and southern calls for slaves' obedience, testifying before a gathering of blacks in Providence, Rhode Island:

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[84] Cain, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery*, 102.
[85] For example, see David W. Blight, ed., *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993).
[86] Many abolitionists and blacks discussed immediate emancipation in terms of the rights it could win for black men such voting, property ownership, and paid labor.
[87] Littlefield, "Blacks and a Theory of Manhood," 69.

> I have known much of religion in the South. In many places, where the blacks are to be preached to, the smallest boy can tell what the text is to be. They have got it by heart– "*Servants be obedient to your masters*." . . . And many at the North are not two cents better.

For many free blacks and slaves faced with imminent physical threats, moral suasion tactics were hardly considered an adequate response. Applying Christian cosmology in real-life terms, Scott objected, "White folks' religion [Christian nonresistance] won't do for black folks anyhow. The devil is at our heels every day in the shape of slaveholders."[88] When whites joined black abolitionist efforts in the 1830s, most northern blacks were supportive of moral suasion, but few blacks would agree that they should refuse to defend themselves, rely completely on the persuasive efforts of white abolitionists, and trust that God would act on their behalf. All of these conditions simply reinforced whites' stereotype of blacks as a subservient, feminine race.

When slaves did revolt or resort to violence, Garrison denied the slaves' agency by denying that they were responsible for their own actions. Garrison refused to acknowledge their revolts as purposeful, organized efforts for freedom and retribution against slaveholders. Rather than credit slaves' agency, Garrison acknowledged slave rebellions as being instigated not by the slaves themselves but by Divine Providence, and proceeding from slaves' conditions of extreme duress. By focusing on the hand of God in slave uprisings, Garrison denied slaves' agency. Yet with his emphasis on divine agency, Garrison sanctified slave rebellions and redirected northerners' fear of slaves to fear of tolerating slavery and the wrath of God this would surely incur. Along with other abolitionists, he expressed no sense of contradiction when he

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[88]Speech by Edward Scott, Delivered at the Roger Williams Freewill Baptist Church, Providence, Rhode Island, 6 October 1857, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 4:367.

reasoned that God could use unchristian slaves' violent rebellion to punish slaveholders for refusing to give up the sin of slavery. This reasoning may have stemmed from Biblical text in which God uses heathen people, or even disease, animals, plants, and natural disasters to teach His people a lesson. Along these lines, Garrison ominously warned the South and the nation that as long as the American people supported the oppressive system of slavery, violent slave insurrections should be expected as God's form of retribution. He connected power with God, which reiterated the antebellum evangelical idea that power rests with God; he referred to the gentle, submissive qualities evangelicals associated with Christ as the model for nonresistance. On December 16, 1859, the day of John Brown's execution for leading the raid on Harper's Ferry, Garrison gave the following address which underscored God's power through slaves' rebellion:

> Whenever there is a contest between the oppressed and the oppressor . . . God knows that my heart must be with the oppressed, and always against the oppressor. Therefore, whenever commenced, I cannot but wish success to all slave insurrections. . . . It is God's method of dealing retribution upon the head of the tyrant. Rather than see men wearing their chains in a cowardly and servile spirit, I would, as an advocate of peace, much rather see them breaking the head of the tyrant with their chains.[89]

In the final phrase of his address, Garrison did not advocate slave insurrection or call it Christlike but affirmed that whenever this was commenced he sided with the slaves and their allies, white or black, and not the slaveholders. Historians such as Leslie Friedman Goldstein and William B. Rogers have argued that Garrison was inconsistent in his support for

[89] John Brown and the Principle of Nonresistance, Boston, 16 December 1859, in Cain, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery*, 156-57. John Brown led and collaborated with 17 white and 5 black men to steal a government arsenal of weapons at Harpers Ferry, Virginia for the cause of antislavery. For details and discussion, see Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid*..

nonresistance because of arguments he made for slave violence. They note that in the 1830s, Garrison affirmed his own nonresistant principles, but argued that Americans were hypocrites if they condemned slave revolts, since these fights for freedom were nothing less than efforts to uphold the nation's "Declaration of Independence." Rogers notes that in the decade before Civil War, Garrison suggested that if anyone should be armed to fight slavery, it should be slaves and not northern whites.[90] Goldstein highlights that in 1857 Garrison went as far as to argue at a Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society meeting that slaves should use peaceful or violent means to free themselves in accordance their "own ideas of right."[91] However, I offer the distinction that Garrison only condoned violent, unchristian means for slaves whom he suggested were unchristian, but advocated nonresistance to northern whites and blacks who were free to live as Christians. Whenever northern whites or blacks applied violence to fight slavery, Garrison did not condemn this but he would not advise it and called such behavior unchristian. Garrison never suggested that slaves could use violence and be Christians, or use violence to become free to live as Christians. He only suggested that slaves moved by God's divine wrath could use violent resistance in accordance with their "own ideas of right" or in terms of the nation's revolutionary principles. Garrison's belief that slaves' bondage prevented them from making moral, Christian choices may have been the basis for his argument that only slaves could be justifiably exempt from the obligation to uphold manly Christian nonresistance. Yet even in their resistance, Garrison only portrayed slaves as God's instruments and not independent moral agents.

[90] William R. Rogers, *"We Are All Together Now": Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and the Prophetic Tradition* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 67.
[91] This quote from *The Liberator*, 13 February 1857, cited in Leslie Friedman Goldstein, "Violence as an Instrument for Social Change: The Views of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)," *Journal of Negro History* 61 (1976): 67.

Unlike Garrison, some northern black abolitionists acknowledged slaves agency by emphasizing slaves' essential duty and capacity to fight and win their freedom. At a convention for black men in Buffalo, New York, Henry Highland Garnet, a former slave and eminent black abolitionist speaker and activist, delivered his "Address to Slaves." In the address, Garnet urged slaves to rebel violently with confidence that they knew what was best for themselves. He assured slaves, "You can plead your own cause, and do the work of emancipation better than any other." Although Garrison used the growing number of slaves to ominously warn whites of the potential for revolt if slavery persisted, Garnet referred to slaves' growing number to bolster slaves' fighting spirit, saying, "Remember that you are THREE MILLIONS." Rather than wait for the hand of God as Garrison advised, Garnet admonished slaves to strike for their freedom and their salvation:

> You are not certain of Heaven, because you suffer yourselves to remain in a state of slavery, where you cannot obey the commandments of the Sovereign of the universe . . . Your condition does not absolve you from your moral obligation . . . NEITHER GOD, NOR ANGELS, NOR JUST MEN COMMAND YOU TO SUFFER FOR A SINGLE MOMENT. THEREFORE IT IS YOUR SOLEMN AND IMPERATIVE DUTY TO USE EVERY MEANS, BOTH MORAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND PHYSICAL, THAT PROMISE SUCCESS.[92]

Most black abolitionists, unlike many white abolitionists such as Garrison, did not draw a distinct line between slavery and freedom in terms of freedom dramatically improving their ability to uphold Christian principles. Northern blacks protested that their lack of civil rights and legal protections made commitment to nonresistance a commitment to accepting white abuse which

[92] Speech by Henry Highland Garnet, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:407; cited with author's commentary in Pasternak, *Rise Now and Fly to Arms*, 45-48.

could lead to death or return to Southern captivity. Alfred M. Green, a black abolitionist who advocated the formation of black Union regiments then recruited for them and served as sergeant major, criticized those who "counsel sitting still to see the salvation of God." Green advised northern black men to fight for their own freedom because "God will help not even help a sinner that will not first help himself."[93] By reminding slaves of their increasing number, recalling successful slave rebellions in the West Indies, and affirming slaves' and northern blacks' God-given duty to fight, some northern black abolitionists provided powerful arguments for black agency.

During the 1850s and as Civil War developed in the 1860s, many northern black men differed with Garrison in that they did not express a sense of conflict or loss of principle over the prospect of being soldiers as well as church-going Christians. Rather, they spoke of both in terms of glowing praise. In a letter from the warfront, George E. Stephens, a black sergeant in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts' Regiment, wrote:

> I propose to associate with my own the name of Mr. Frederick Johnson, one of the most accomplished soldiers in the 54th Mass. vol. Infantry . . . Sergeant Johnson is a member of Rev. Mr. Grimes Church [of] Boston. . . . I cannot speak in terms too glowing of Sergeant J. when I say that he is a Christian and a soldier.[94]

Stephens response contrasted with Garrison's reservations about men who decided to fight. Garrison counseled each man to decide for himself whether or not to use physical, armed measures during the"[e]vents of the 1850s–the Fugitive Slave Law, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, attempts to annex Cuba as a slave territory, the campaign to reopen the African slave trade, and

[93] Alfred M. Green to Robert Hamilton, October 1861, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 5:122.
[94] Stephens is referring to Leonard A. Grimes and his Twelfth Baptist Church in Boston. George E. Stephens to William Still, 19 September 1863, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 5:242,20n.

the Dred Scot decision," events which "revealed the domination of proslavery forces over the federal government."[95] He offered the same counsel when the Union passed draft orders and declared war. However, he also judged others' use of physical, armed measures to be unchristian. When the rich white philanthropist Gerrit Smith abandoned nonresistance to fight proslavery settlers in Kansas, Garrison lamented that Smith had abandoned his faith in God: "What a change in the pacific disposition of Gerrit Smith! His faith in God . . . has given place to Sharpe's rifles." Although Garrison was also opposed to proslavery "border ruffians" and the U.S. government's support for them, he nonetheless condemned Smith for "setting an evil example, and measurably throwing his money away" in his effort to follow "his own present convictions of duty."[96] Similarly, when George Thompson Garrison, Garrison's first son, left to join the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Negro regiment in 1863,[97] Garrison sent him a message which reflected a mixture of condescension, love, and respect:

> Yet I have nothing but praise to give you that you have been faithful to your highest convictions, and taking your life in your hands, are willing to lay it down, . . . if need be, in the cause of freedom, and for the suppression of slavery and the rebellion. True, *I could have wished you could ascend to what I believe a higher plane of moral heroism and a nobler method of self-sacrifice*; but as you are true to yourself, I am glad of your fidelity, and proud of your willingness to run any risk in a cause that is undeniably just and good.[98]

Unlike his two brothers, George Thompson Garrison did not declare himself a nonresistant and conscientious objector to the draft.[99] Garrison offered northern

[95] This quote is taken from discussion of proslavery forces in the 1850s in the introduction to *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:53. See pages 50-55 for general explanations of the various events.
[96] WLG to Ann R. Brimhall, Boston, 8 August 1856, *Letters*, 4:401.
[97] He rose to the rank of Captain. WLG to Edwin M. Stanton, 15 September 1865, Boston, *Letters*, 5:296.
[98] WLG to George Thompson Garrison, Boston, 6 August 1863, *Letters*, 5:167. (emphasis added)
[99] WLG to Elizabeth Buffum Chace, Boston, 7 August 1862, *Letters*, 5:106.

men besides his son similar advice about the superiority of nonresistance, but the need for each man to decide his duty in the war against slavery and to be prepared to accept the consequences.[100] When the government issued draft orders, he denied that conscientious objectors could morally hire substitutes, since "one conscientiously opposed to all war could not employ another to do what he could not do himself."[101] Although Garrison claimed every man should choose whether to fight according to his own conscience, Garrison upheld his support and practice of Christian nonresistance as the most Christian, the most heroic, and the most manly.

Garrison's persistent support for nonresistance over the years failed to complement northern blacks' increasingly militant strategies and tactics, and caused his bonds with black abolitionists to weaken. Northern blacks were more apt to espouse moral suasion when cooperating with Garrison in the 1830s, but by the 1840s they found other white leaders and started their own black societies which allowed them to be more independent and militant.[102] In separating from Garrison, black abolitionists continued to honor the support Garrison provided as the first white men to champion immediate emancipation and offer a broadbased vision for increasing their civil rights. As blacks, especially black men outside of the eastern antislavery establishment became more militant and interested in heading their own abolitionist efforts, their efforts became less integrated with his and sometimes even strained and severed.[103] Garrison's nonresistant, moral suasionist stance was better adapted for white abolitionists far north of southern conflicts and those who perceived reward

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[100] See *The Liberator*, 19 & 26 September 1962.
[101] WLG to Chace, *Letters*, 5:107.
[102] See editor's remarks in *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:49; and Pease and Pease *They Who Would Be Free*, 235.
[103] One example is the dispute between Garrison and Frederick Douglass. For editor's remarks and primary sources regarding this dispute, see "The Douglass-Garrison Controversy and the Black Community," in *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 4:174-86.

through Christian martyrdom. It was impracticable for blacks and the whites who joined them in forcibly resisting proslavery laws and the legalization of slavery in states being added to the Union. Blacks operated from a position of weakness due to their unequal rights and protections before the law in the North and South. Along with blacks, most white abolitionists decided by 1839 that nonresistant means alone would not succeed in ending slavery, and many refused to abide by pacific principles. Although Garrison opined that slavery might only be ended through war by 1858, he would not recruit men for the Union armies or urge them to join.[104]

[104] Rogers, "'*We Are All Together Now*,'" 73.

CONCLUSION

Through analysis of William Lloyd Garrison's construction of nonresistant Christian manliness, the ways in which Garrison assumed a paternalistic stance in relation to northern white abolitionists and free and enslaved blacks can be addressed. Although in his efforts to include, support, and work with northern women and blacks Garrison defied white men's unjust, dominant position in American society, in his arguments for Christian nonresistance he elevated his perspective as the most manly and the most Christian.

Garrison's arguments for Christian nonresistance reinforced northern white middle-class ideals of manliness and his own leadership as a white Protestant male. In keeping with the northern white middle- and upper- classes ideal of achieving manly self-improvement through individual effort, restraint, and self-control rather than brute strength, Garrison argued that men should use nonresistant moral suasion to convince the North and the South to reform their society by accepting immediate emancipation. Although he advocated nonresistant moral suasion based on the feminized antebellum image of the submissive, loving Christ, he showed that this tactic could be manly and strong by using the bold, militant language of a Christian soldier. As for slaveholders and clergymen who defended slavery, Garrison dismissed them as effeminate, morally weak men. By so doing, he unwittingly reinforced the antebellum notion that femininity and femaleness were the inferior, undesirable opposites of masculinity and maleness. In contrast to slaveholders and proslavery clergymen whom Garrison portrayed as unchristian and unmanly, Garrison

offered descriptions to identify himself as manly and Christlike.

In his efforts to advocate nonresistant moral suasion as the only means for effecting immediate emancipation, Garrison did not demand that others accept nonresistance in order to participate in abolitionist efforts, but described his position as the most manly and the most Christlike. By claiming his belief and practice of nonresistant moral suasion as the most manly and the most Christlike, Garrison denied that other abolitionists, especially free and enslaved blacks, could be respected by him unless they followed his leadership. For slaves, Garrison advocated nonresistance in ways that reinforced the antebellum northern white evangelical notion that slaves were spiritually damned because they lacked the freedom to live by their own moral, Christian choices. Furthermore, he discussed slave revolts in foreboding terms that problematized them and denied slaves' agency by highlighting God's retribution through slave rebellion. As for northern blacks, Garrison's call for manly Christian nonresistance demanded more from them than northern white abolitionists. They could not live as easily as whites according to the Garrisonian principle of manly Christian nonresistance without paying dearly with their lives. Although northern blacks had greater freedom than slaves, like slaves they were constrained and made vulnerable by their lack of civil liberties and legal protections. By dictating nonresistance to slaves and northern blacks, Garrison disregarded their own visions of Christian manliness. While he championed freedom and civil rights for blacks, he advised that it would be better if they secured freedom and rights based on his own nonresistant principles rather than their own. In effect, whenever Garrison advised slaves and northern blacks to adapt nonresistance, a tactic and practice more advantageous for whites than blacks, he asked them to submit to a northern white man's advice and white men's control.

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