In the World, Not of the World

175 Years of the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

Michael C. Wolfe

Before the Civil War, before Reconstruction, before Temperance … there was the *Advocate.*

Imagine living in South Carolina in the early 1800s – a time when agriculture was king, slavery was an ironclad part of society and Methodism was sweeping the nation.

As division grew between the North and the South, a clamorous chorus began to resound. A Southern voice within Methodism was not only desired, but demanded. And that voice got its song at General Conference 1836, when three distinct regional newspapers were authorized: one in Richmond, one in Nashville and one in Charleston.

The Charleston paper, called the *Southern Christian Advocate* and edited by the Rev. William Capers, had a mission to teach the Bible, promote missions, spread the revival of the Second Great Awakening – and be an advocate for Southern interests. The *Advocate* would eventually become the most prominent voice of Southern religion, crossing all denominational lines and enjoying subscriptions in almost every Southern state.

Today, 175 years after its very first paper on June 24, 1837, that newspaper still exists as the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate.*

This is the story of the *Advocate.* But more than a history of the newspaper itself, it is history of the stories the *Advocate* tried its best to tell. It is an inside view of what the people called Methodist truly experienced during 175 years of rich and often tumultuous times. From the Civil War, two World Wars, temperance and the Civil Rights Movement, right up until today, this book reveals the news of the day and how people felt about it.

They were people seeking to follow Jesus Christ, and yet, they were people caught in the times and places in which they lived. In many ways, they sought to live within their world while not being of their world. In this, their story is one of both success and failure. Such is the history of the *Advocate.*

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About the Author: Dr. Michael C. Wolfe

Wolfe is a native of South Carolina and was ordained an elder in The United Methodist Church in 1998. He entered ministry while at Wofford College, serving in youth ministry in several churches. He earned his M.Div. at Asbury Theological Seminary and then worked in United Methodist missions and ministry in Philadelphia, Penn. He studied archaeology at Jerusalem University College and earned his Ph.D. in religious history from the University of Virginia. He has pastored churches and has taught in colleges and universities in South Carolina and Virginia. He has written for religious journals and is the author of *The Abundant Life Prevails*, a religious history of the Penn Center, published by Baylor University Press. He is married to Marley Wolfe, a psychotherapist in private practice.

In the World, Not of the World:
175 Years of the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

What does it mean as a Christian to be in the world but not of the world? And in light of this question, how do we communicate about our faith? This fascinating history of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* reveals how the church has wrestled with this important communications challenge over the years. It shows how faith is affected by the social realities in which we live, how the church engages in conversation with the culture and internally with itself, all the while assessing faithfulness, mission and communication with integrity. What a fascinating look at an important communications endeavor that remains as relevant today as it was when it started 175 years ago.

– Larry Hollon, General Secretary, United Methodist Communications

Michael Wolfe has written a fascinating and informative account of the *S.C. United Methodist Advocate* in the life, ministry and mission of the Methodist movement over the past 175 years. Readers see the dark side when the *Advocate* editors were mostly silent on slavery, promoted the Civil War and neglected the Jim Crow laws. The author celebrates recent editors who boldly supported the Civil Rights movement, called for the Confederate flag to be moved from the dome of the capitol and encouraged the people called Methodist to open their hearts and the doors of the churches to welcome all people. Every United Methodist will benefit from reading this book. Get a copy. Place a copy in the church library. Subscribe to the *Advocate.*

– Bishop Marshall L. Meadors Jr., Retired, The United Methodist Church

Through the eye of memory, this account of the *S.C. United Methodist Advocate* shares the story of the people of God in the S.C. Annual Conference's coming of age. More than a history book about the role of the conference paper in the life of the annual conference, this book gives the reader a glimpse into the ethos of Methodism in this state. It bears witness to the hopes and fears of all the years. But be warned, this recollection lays bare the needs, deeds, courage, commitment and misgivings of a people in the grips of a powerful God ever on the move. If you really want to know what God has been up to among the people of South Carolina over the last century, then this book is for you.

– The Rev. Ken Nelson, S.C. Conference Congregational Specialist for African-American Ministries

This is not only the story of the *Advocate,* it's the story of how the *Advocate* has covered Methodism in South Carolina. Dr. Wolfe has used the *Advocate*'s own words to show how the church and its institutions have grown, and how Methodists have responded to the great challenges in our state's history. In this book, he shares the *Advocate*'s unique perspective on the changing tides of Methodism.

– Dr. Phillip Stone, Wofford College and S.C. Conference Archivist

Dr. Wolfe brings the stories of the *Advocate* to life in a brand new and exciting way. Using the stories from the *Advocate,* he captures the essence of being a United Methodist in South Carolina for over 175 years. This book is a beautiful example of our deep, rich and sometimes complicated history.

– Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor, Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church
(formerly of the S.C. Conference)

The *Advocate* has not only chronicled but also led our beloved conference through the years. Every major move that the Holy Spirit has made among us has been reported and interpreted by the *Advocate.* Here is the moving story of how the *Advocate* has served our church by living up to its name – advocating for a church on the move and a God who is not only the way and the life but also the truth. This book is an eloquent testimonial to the faithful witness of a distinguished advocate for the faith.

– Bishop William H. "Will" Willimon, North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church

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175 Years of the
South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

by Michael C. Wolfe

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South Carolina United Methodist Advocate Board of Trust
Columbia, S.C.

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FOREWORD

It's there. It's high on a shelf in the Archives Room of the Wofford College Library in Spartanburg, South Carolina – the very first edition of the *Southern Christian Advocate,* Volume 1, Number 1, June 24, 1837.

To touch it, to read it, to think – 175 years ago someone else's hands held these very pages, and their eyes read words about a world far different from the world today. It is an awesome, powerful, moving experience – an experience that led today's *Advocate* Board of Trust to record what that edition and those that continuously followed could tell us about Methodism, Christianity and how the *Advocate* has survived in a time when many other religious publications have not.

In two short years a book was conceived, written and published in preparation for the 175th anniversary of the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate.* It was the board's intent to have a ready reference and research tool for historians of future anniversaries. We are nearing two centuries of publication.

The purpose stated in the first issue was to "promote good morals and religions, giving expression to the views and feelings of the people, be kind but firm on all subjects bearing on the church and forward the cause of Christian benevolences." The purpose of today's *Advocate* is to "connect United Methodists by independently reporting news, engaging readers, and providing a forum for dialogue." Both are important religious journals that set the bar to be the best.

From Capers to Connor, readers will be captivated by what they learn about the United Methodist Church and how its 28 editors responded to the times.

Where was the *Advocate* spending most of its energies? How did the church respond to slavery, the Civil War, the World Wars, hard times, missions and missionaries, women's rights, splits in the church and protests?

Was the *Advocate* listening to Jesus' prayer (John 17:14-19) to be "in the world," or was the *Advocate* responding as if it were "of the world"?

Read on.

– Marilyn Murphy, Chairperson, 2006-2012
South Carolina United Methodist Advocate *Board of Trust*

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PREFACE

The *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* is a survivor. The newspaper, with an ancestry dating back to 1825, was formally launched in 1837. It has had a number of metamorphoses, but has kept to its purposes for 175 years.

The South Carolina Methodist Conference created the first newspaper at the urging of the Rev. Stephen Olin and the Rev. James Andrew, who believed a religious newspaper was needed to carry forward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The conference appointed Olin to be the first editor, but ill health prevented this. Thus, in October 1825, the Rev. William Capers, as editor, launched *The Wesleyan Journal.* Capers was emerging as a figure in the history of the American South. The newspaper seemed poised for a long and successful run.

However, Capers and others connected with *The Wesleyan Journal* longed for a more national level of journalism and, in early 1827, they merged *The Wesleyan Journal* and *The Christian Advocate,* which had begun in September 1826 in New York City. The result was *The Christian Advocate and Journal.* It was published in New York as the proud national voice of the Methodist movement in America. Capers and others strongly felt there was no need for a regional newspaper in the South.

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However, by 1836, there was a great call at the Methodist General Conference to create several new regional papers in cities such as Richmond, Nashville and Charleston. Demands were advanced for the absolute necessity of a Southern voice within Methodism. By June 1837, a new religious publication appeared: the *Southern Christian Advocate,* again edited by Capers, who was now a major force within Methodism. The paper was a direct successor to *The Wesleyan Journal* and had almost identical purposes – teach the Bible, promote missions and spread the revival of the Second Great Awakening.

There was a newly listed purpose, however: as its title suggested, it would be an advocate for Southern interests. The *Southern Christian Advocate,* published in Charleston, would become the most prominent voice of Southern religion, crossing all denominational lines and enjoying subscriptions in almost every Southern state.

This is the story of that newspaper. It is a different type of story. It involves the biographies of many people. It follows the regional history of South Carolina. It traces the religious history of the Methodist movement. It examines national and world events. But this is the history of a newspaper.

Chapter 1 seeks to understand the creation of a Southern culture, which ultimately demanded its own newspaper within Methodism. Chapter 2 looks

at the early years of the paper and deals with the difficult subject of slavery. Chapter 3 follows the Civil War and the extinction of many religious papers. Chapter 4 pushes into the Progressive Era as Protestant Christianity seemed victorious over the world. Chapter 5 watches the collapse of that world with two world wars and the Great Depression. Chapter 6 highlights the newspaper as it finally reached maturity in the Civil Rights Movement. Finally, Chapter 7 reflects on the decline and renewal of Methodism and the newspaper itself.

Over the years, chased by the armies of war and the accidents of history, the newspaper would change its home city many times. New editors would bring new ideas and directions. Its very name would change with the times.

But the *South Carolina United Methodist Advocate,* as it would come to be known, would survive into the 21st century, celebrating its 175th anniversary. This is its amazing story.

– Dr. Michael C. Wolfe

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Chapter 1

THE WESLEYAN JOURNAL AND THE CHANGE IN SOUTHERN CULTURE

It all started back in 1825 with the publication of *The Wesleyan Journal* as a regional Methodist newspaper in Charleston, South Carolina.

The paper was successful, but church leaders soon wanted a united national expression for the young Methodist Church in America. Rather than supporting small regional papers, leadership within Methodism felt strongly that a single journal published in New York would serve the needs of the entire church in America. Therefore, after less than two years of publication, *The Wesleyan Journal* came to an end. Its influence would linger.

Only 10 years later, at the General Conference of 1836, there was a clamorous chorus desiring the establishment of Christian newspapers for the South. Why was there such a dramatic change of mind in a short period of time? The answer is that many issues had changed in America, in South Carolina and in Methodism during that previous decade. The newspaper which was born that next year would be called the *Southern Christian Advocate.*

To understand the founding of that newspaper requires an understanding of what changed in the South in the lives of Methodist people between the years 1827 and 1836. They were people seeking to follow Jesus Christ, and yet, they were people caught in the times and places in which they lived. In many ways, they sought to live within their world while not being of their world. In this, their story is one of both success and failure.

And such is the history of the *Advocate.*

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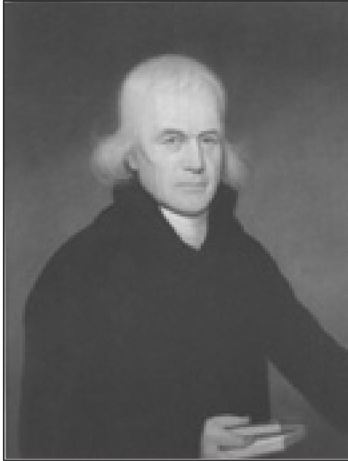
Methodism from 1784 to 1816

Following the American Revolution, the Methodist movement in the new United States no longer felt connected with the mother-church in Britain. Going against the views of his brother Charles, John Wesley sent Thomas Coke to America to establish a Methodist Episcopal Church.

At the famous 1784 Christmas Conference in Baltimore, Md., Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were consecrated as bishops of the new church that would soon stretch down the Eastern Seaboard from New England to Georgia. By the time of Francis Asbury's death in 1816, the Methodist Church

would be the largest religious denomination in America, but it would have its conflicts. Methodist leaders debated over bishops and polity, over itinerancy and sacraments. The most serious quarrel to divide the fledgling church was the issue of slavery, the same question that would ultimately divide the nation. That same concern would be at the heart of the Advocate's founding.



Francis Asbury, 1745-1816, the founding bishop of the Methodist Church in America. Sent by John Wesley as a missionary to America in 1771, he promoted the circuit rider system. *(Courtesy of the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church)*

In the early days of Methodism, the leaders of the church took a stand against the institution of slavery. Thomas Rankin and Richard Whatcoat, the first of the preachers in the 1770s, spoke quietly against it. Freeborn Garrettson said he hated slavery. Philip Gatch migrated from his home in Virginia to Ohio to escape all contact with slavery. When Methodist Society leaders met in Baltimore in 1780, four years prior to the church's founding, they spoke against slavery.

Preachers were to see to the religious instruction of the slaves, and they were to exert influence toward the eventual freedom of the slaves. One way they were to influence others was by freeing their own slaves. There was no clear ruling for the general members of the societies, but it was not an issue Methodists could easily ignore.

The reason it could not be ignored was because from the beginning, Methodist societies were filled with African-American members. In the mid-1760s, pre-dating Wesley's first missionaries to America, Robert Strawbridge led a Methodist society meeting at Sam's Creek, Md. Among its charter members was a slave woman, Anne Sweitzer. Jacob Toogood was also a member of the society and became a local preacher. The first societies, formed in Philadelphia and New York by early worship leaders Joseph Pilmore and Philip Embury, included African-American members. Philip Bruce wrote to Bishop Thomas Coke saying, "The greatest work in many parts of this circuit is among the blacks."[1] The ranks of African-American Methodists swelled until, in many areas of South Carolina, African-American membership out-numbered white.

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By the 1784 Christmas Conference, leaders of Methodism were ready to make bold claims against slavery. Armed with the spirit of the American Revolution and with the creation of their own church, Asbury and Coke, as newly consecrated bishops, sought to require all Methodists to liberate their slaves or be refused at the table of the Lord's Supper. The preachers sent the new ruling to the churches, but with almost half of Methodists living in Virginia, the bishops found it impossible to enforce such a rule.

By spring of 1785, leaders Jessie Lee and Devereaux Jarrett urged for a slower, more prudent approach. Provoking Coke's anger, they argued that harsh and speedy measures against slavery would close all doors for Methodist preachers and thus do no good for anyone. In order to preach to whites and help African-Americans in any manner, the new church would need to move slowly, they said. Such a compromise would become the primary response to slavery over the next generation.

Painfully, Bishop Asbury wrote frequently in his journals concerning his opposition to slavery and of his sympathies with the slaves, but he despaired about what to do. After he expressed his views in 1802, plantation owners warned Asbury not to come to Charleston that year if he valued his life.

Of all the founders, Coke was the most uncompromising in his hostility to slavery. In Virginia, he was assaulted by an angry mob. He received threats on his life, and lawsuits were filed against him. Ultimately Coke abandoned most of his American work to devote his life to other ministries in Britain. Such a stance could not survive in the Early-American environment.

Historian Donald Matthews, in his groundbreaking work "Slavery and Methodism," demonstrated that the original high standards of the church had to be modified if the church were to continue to attract large numbers of followers.[2] In the rapid growth of evangelicalism in America, preachers avoided politics more and more. Alexis de Tocqueville commented on this after his visit to the young nation.

John Wesley's role in politics was complex. He wrote concerning issues such as poverty, the abuse of wealth, and slavery. Wesley's last written letter was to encourage abolitionist and Parliament member Wilbur Wilberforce to continue his work. And yet, Wesley admonished his preachers, "It is your part to be peacemakers, to be loving and tender to all, but to addict yourselves to no (political) party."

In America, Francis Asbury hated slavery, but with many regrets, he came to decide it was something he could not change. He did not want preachers meddling in politics because he believed his first commission from God was

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to lead men and women to salvation in Jesus Christ. Nothing else could stand in the way of that.

In Early-American history, only the Quakers emerged with a consistent voice critical of slavery. However, the Quakers arrived at their position over a period of many decades and from within their own small fellowship. American Quakers first published pamphlets against slavery in 1714. They worked within their societies to slowly reason against the institution. Finally in 1830, the Quakers in America completely eliminated slave ownership within their own body.

In contrast, in 1784, Methodists attempted to leap to a platform against slavery and sought to speak to the broad public. Ultimately, that platform did not have enough support to stand. Although *The Book of Discipline* continued to contain a strong statement against slavery, enforcement was gradually weakened. It was possible to ignore the rule or to reinterpret it in a different manner. In fact, in 1808, a thousand special copies of *The Book of Discipline* were published for use in South Carolina with the rule on slavery omitted. In 1816, the year of Asbury's death, a special committee at General Conference reported the following:

> The committee to whom was referred the business of slavery … (has) taken the subject into serious consideration and … are of opinion that, under the present existing circumstances in relation to slavery, little can be done to abolish a practice so contrary to the principles of moral justice. They are sorry to say that the evil appears to be past remedy… .[3]

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There was a powerful intermingling of religious history with economic history on this issue. No matter how hard Methodist leaders tried to avoid the contamination of the world, they were caught up in the secular events of their day. As Methodism expanded to become the largest religious group in America, its leaders found it more difficult to remain consistent on the issue of slavery. The 1816 General Conference, the year Asbury died, is seen as the end of Methodism's initial stand against slavery. In order to stand united as a national movement, compromise was agreed upon.

The Wesleyan Journal: 1825

At the time of *The Wesleyan Journal*'s founding in 1825, the Methodist

THE WESLEYAN JOURNAL.

SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1,

In October 1825, the Rev. William Capers launched *The Wesleyan Journal.* The newspaper was a precursor to the *Southern Christian Advocate,* later renamed the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate. *(Courtesy of the Wofford College Archives)*

Church was strongly united by a spirit of compromise on the question of slavery.

Methodists could compromise because of their great success in so many other areas. In much of this period, the Methodist Church took a leading role in the Second Great Awakening. Membership swelled as preachers spread Wesley's message of holiness across the land. Methodists were deeply united as a national movement in teaching the Bible, in working for revival and in preaching holiness, the earliest topics for *The Wesleyan Journal.*

The first issue of *The Wesleyan Journal* in October 1825 began by telling its purpose:

> This publication is designed … to contain the religious and missionary intelligence of the day, accounts of the revival, and it will bestow ample notice upon all the institutions of piety and benevolence which so honorably distinguish our present age. A portion of its columns will be devoted to the interests of education and literature, of arts and sciences, of agriculture and domestic economy, and to other objects connected with public and individual prosperity. … We would record the triumphs of the cross and the achievements of benevolence … to stir mightily the elements of all that is godly and virtuous among us. We would provoke the reader … to love and

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> good works, and call him out upon the field of strenuous and sanctified exertion."[4]

While a Methodist publication, its intention was to represent a broad ecumenical spirit that would teach the essentials of Christian truth. Like Wesley, who had sought to avoid "opinions" and stick to the essentials of the faith, *The Wesleyan Journal* wanted to avoid narrow-mindedness.

Yet, in this first issue, the *Journal* announced that it was to be an advocate for Methodist doctrines. The "publishers, in making this frank avowal of their purposes," it said, "disclaim all other sentiments than those of cordial respect and Christian affection towards other religious denominations, and pledge that the narrowness and rancor of a sectarian spirit will never disgrace their columns … ."[5]

One of the major purposes, which still remains in today's *Advocate,* was to teach the Bible. The early editions contained a high content of biblical study that made use of the Greek and Hebrew Bible, quoted from ancient and modern commentators and sought to educate the general reader.

In the first installment, there was a Bible study on Matthew 13:12: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath." The article contained a Greek word study, "that *ostis exei,* he who hath, means the rich man; and *ostis ouk exei,* who hath not, means the poor … " (Italics added). Euripides, Xenophon and Virgil are quoted as part of the study as a comparison to classical Greek. A parallel comparison is made with the same passage in Luke 8:18:

> It is evident that these persons had something which might be taken away from them for, 1. The Word of God was planted in their hearts, and 2. It had already produced good effect, but they permitted the devil, the cares of this world, and the love of riches to destroy its produce.[6]

Also in the opening edition, there is an article on the names of God as found in the Bible and how their meanings apply to Christ. Another Bible study centered on Isaiah 27, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." There was also a study on Job. Fully one-third of each issue was devoted to biblical studies, offering a high level of theological learning.

Readers, with limited means of communication, were exposed to small, tight print with long sentences and well-developed intellectual content. Yet

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William Capers opened one of his lead articles about the new *Journal* with the warning:

> The Wesleyan Journal, in our hands, cannot and will not pretend to learning. We confess that we know not how to gauge the ancients; nor can we fix the measure of the moderns. We … can claim the advantages of common sense … and suppose we can distinguish her fine gold from tinsel pedantry … . We labour to promote the interests of Religion, and wish to do it as religious men.[7]

One of the early interests was missionary work, a theme that has continued in the paper even today. In these early days, the paper devoted large spaces to reports from around the world and from many denominations.

The first edition focused on the mission to the Creek Indians based on a report from the 1825 South Carolina Annual Conference. Agents from the U.S. Department of War had interfered with the religious interests of the mission, it reported. A letter of complaint had been written to the President of the United States and to the War Department:

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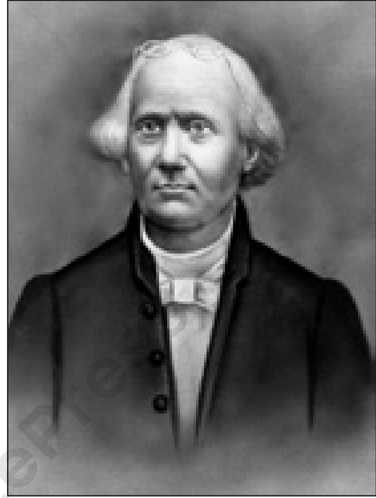
> Under these unpleasant circumstances, the Mission can scarcely be said to have improved … . The personal confidence which … our resident Missionary has acquired among the Indians and particularly with the chiefs … has enabled him to perform Divine Services without molestation at the Mission House every Lord's Day … . (However) the resolution against preaching, deters the Blacks, and is said to prevent the Indians generally from attending. The progress of the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic is by no means discreditable, and some give evidence of genius and talent.[8]

The second edition of *The Wesleyan Journal* gave a lengthy history of the missionary efforts of the South Carolina Conference dating back to 1800. These began:

> … the mission of that most pious and intrepid man Tobias Gibbon, who in the year 1800 on his way as a missionary from this Conference to the Natchez (Indians), attempted the untried dangers of descending the Cumberland, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers in a paddling canoe … . At Natchez, he first planted that seed of the Kingdom which has since spread so happily … . This indefatigable missionary

> after four years of arduous service, ended his labours and his life together, a martyr in the cause of souls.[9]

Each weekly edition of *The Wesleyan Journal* carried exciting stories of bold ministers of the Gospel who were busy carrying Jesus Christ to the world. One of these bold ministries was the newly formed Mission to the Slaves. In 1824, the South Carolina Conference had announced it hoped to create "a separate department" exclusively directed towards the slaves' spiritual welfare. Presiding Elder James O. Andrew, who would later cause the division of the Methodist Church, North and South, was an early enthusiast of the mission. He wrote in *The Wesleyan Journal* that the church was negligent in its duties to the slaves. He and others opposed all "pitiful philosophy that would degrade blacks below the standards of men."[10] Therefore, a mission to the slaves was proposed with *The Wesleyan Journal*'s editor, William Capers, as the supervisor of the mission.



William Capers, first editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate,* 1790-1855. *(Courtesy of the Wofford College Archives)*

In time, the Mission to the Slaves would become the centerpiece of the Southern church's mission work, surpassing all other mission efforts. The *Journal* would be the loudest voice supporting the mission. But initially in 1824-1825, to many people, the Mission to the Slaves was more of an idea than an actual organization.[11]

Nevertheless, the topic of slavery did not remain absent from the Journal. In the fourth edition of *The Wesleyan Journal,* Oct. 22, 1825, Capers published part one of a two-part, lengthy article titled, "Persecution of the Wesleyan Methodists in Barbados."

Reprinted from the Methodist Magazine, the story reports a riot on the part of the white planters in the West Indies against Methodist missionaries who appear to be anti-slavery or at least supportive of the slaves. According to Dr. Phillip Stone, historical archivist at Wofford College in Spartanburg, its publication sheds light on *The Wesleyan Journal.* Such an article is unlikely

to have been published 10 years later, showing how drastically life changed in South Carolina in that decade.

The Rev. William J. Shrewsbury was for some years a missionary in British Methodism. In 1816, he was sent out to work in Tortola, where he remained for two years. In 1818, he traveled to Granada and built a Methodist chapel with funds from the governor. In 1820, he was sent to Barbados where there had been some religious problems in the past.

Shrewsbury was known to be prudent and conciliatory. It was expected he would calm tensions, but, soon the Barbados plantation owners accused him of being part of a "villainous African society" and of writing letters concerning "the subject of African slavery." He was charged and threatened with hanging. He was released, but over the next three years, endured many insults.

On Sunday, Oct. 5, 1823, his chapel was surrounded by a mob, demanding an end to the services. Bottles filled with burning oil were thrown into the chapel and one woman was burned considerably. On Oct. 17, a large mob attacked the chapel again, broke windows and destroyed Bibles and tracts. They attacked Shrewsbury's home, destroying furniture and dishes. That afternoon, posters were placed around the town announcing, "The great and signal triumph over Methodism, and total destruction of the chapel." This story is reported in great detail and then, *The Wesleyan Journal* writes the following lines: "Not a single mulatto or negro was concerned in the disturbance, so that the assailants consisted entirely of whites, and these whites were planters, merchants, traders, and other inhabitants of respectability."[12]

In the Oct. 29 edition of the *Journal,* the story of Shrewsbury continued. Following the riot, the situation came to the attention of the government authorities. The authorities ruled in favor of the mob and decreed

> their motives were patriotic and loyal – namely to eradicate from this soil the germ of Methodism, which was spreading its baneful influence over a certain class, and which would ultimately be injurious to both church and state. With this view, the chapel was demolished and the villainous preacher who headed it was compelled by a speedy flight to remove himself from the island. With a fixed determination, therefore, to put an end to Methodism in this island, all Methodist preachers are warned not to approach our shores … God save the King and the people.[13]

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The Wesleyan Journal says Shrewsbury and his wife escaped the island before he was hanged. It praises Shrewsbury as a patient and forgiving man of God. In every way, Shrewsbury is the hero of the story and the white planters are the villains. The African-American slaves are portrayed in a positive light. The bulk of the article, running six long columns in two issues, hints again and again that Shrewsbury was sympathetic to the slaves, and yet, states his innocence in being part of an "African society."

William Capers, born of an aristocratic planter family, would know where his white readers' sympathies would lie – not with Shrewsbury. White planters in South Carolina in the 1820s lived in mortal fear of slave riots and secret slave societies.

Part of the reasons Capers published the account might be found in the final paragraphs. Shrewsbury, now safely working on Saint Vincent's Island, wrote a letter back to his congregation on Barbados. He said he had forgiven all men for what they had done to him and urged them to be forgiving to their oppressors. He counseled his former African-American congregation members to be

> patient to all men. Never speak disrespectfully to any in authority … you that are slaves will, I hope, be exceedingly careful … . Let no slave who is a Methodist be dishonest, lazy, or impertinent … but let everyone be sober, honest, industrious, and useful to his owner … . And as for political matters, whether you be bond or free, never meddle with them.[14]

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Shrewsbury, as well as Capers, had a deep concern for the slaves. Yet he wrote that the most prudent course of action would be to submit. He did not wish them to come to harm. In the previous generation under the leadership of Asbury, Methodists in the South were under suspicion of being "abolitionists in disguise." Capers believed his generation of churchmen would have to go forward another way.

The article's publication demonstrates that, in 1825, there still existed open means of communication about these subjects. South Carolinians would still talk about these subjects. But in the next 10 years, by the time the *Southern Christian Advocate* was founded, those doors would have completely closed. By then, the Southerners' minds were closed on the subject.

The Creation of the Southern Mind

To understand the founding of the *Southern Christian Advocate* in 1837 is to understand what happened in those same 10 years.

In the mid-1820s, minds were still open and it seemed a national spirit could be maintained. *The Wesleyan Journal* was a successful enterprise with a broad readership, publishing articles on a wide range of topics. In 1827, the unity of the Methodist Church was demonstrated by its decision to form a single journal in New York to be the voice of Methodism. Capers, editor of *The Wesleyan Journal,* was happy to unite his efforts with *The Christian Advocate,* a paper begun in 1826 in New York. Hence *The Christian Advocate and Journal* began publication in New York.

This might have been the end of the story concerning a Southern religious newspaper. No one seemed to want it or need it. So what happened in those next ten years?

To understand the founding of the *Advocate* in 1837 requires a look at South Carolina history in the early 1800s. South Carolina emerged from the War of 1812 with a prosperous economy. The state entered the "era of good feelings."[15] There was a strong national unity, especially in the South. And why not? Southern politicians dominated the federal government: James Monroe of Virginia was president, and his six cabinet members included John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, William Crawford of Georgia and William Wirt of Virginia. Henry Clay of Kentucky was the speaker of the House.

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With such a large share in the federal leadership, Southerners were happy with the nation's direction. Men such as Calhoun urged a stronger central federal government. At that time, Calhoun, then Secretary of War, denounced the idea of state's rights. The nation was united behind the Tariff of 1816, supporting funding for roads, canals and the founding of the Second Bank of the United States in Philadelphia. Everywhere, expansion and success were seen. Surrounded by prosperity, few people in the nation questioned how the success was happening or who was being crushed under the wheels of progress. This national spirit was reflected in Methodism as it rose during this period to become the largest religious group in the nation.

Then, in 1819, an economic panic swept the nation. Money, spent so freely, began to evaporate. By 1821, Congress turned more fiscally conservative, ending plans for additional internal improvements and new military fortifications. Tariffs and taxes, which were earlier supported as a way to improve the nation, lost support, especially in the South.

In the midst of these hard economic times, developments occurred in the early 1820s that began to open up lines of stress in South Carolina churches:

• First, the 1820 census revealed, for the first time since the 1770s, South Carolina had more African-American people living within the state than white people. This would continue until the eve of the Civil War. South Carolina's population was roughly 60 percent African-American and 40 percent white during this period. This created great fear among white South Carolinians.

• Second, the national debate over Missouri entering the Union as a slave state caused dissension. The debate ran hot in South Carolina. Rep. Charles Pinckney, a founding father of the nation from South Carolina, gave a passionate speech denying Congress any right to interfere with the institution of slavery in any territory. However, most South Carolinians in 1820, including John Calhoun, were satisfied with that year's Missouri Compromise that admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state.

The compromise also drew a line separating North and South, designating what would be free and slave territory. Calhoun said this would "settle forever a question which has so deeply agitated this country."[16] It would not settle the question at all, but rather increase the fury. The case of Missouri entering the Union placed the issue of slavery on the national stage. Citizens of both North and South now knew a divide had been drawn.

• The third and most frightening concern for South Carolina whites in the 1820s was the growing threat of slave revolts. Slave revolts had occurred in the past in Virginia and in the Caribbean. In the early 1800s, South Carolina slave-owners discovered several plans for revolts in such places as Columbia in 1805, in Camden in 1816, and along the Ashepoo River in 1816. The greatest threat came in 1822 in Charleston when a house slave reported to his owner he had heard of a slave uprising. A freed slave, Denmark Vesey, seemed to be the key.

Vesey had earned money to buy his freedom in 1800. Vesey was a carpenter and a Sunday school teacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Reports said he used the book of Exodus as an exhortation to rise up to freedom. Secret plans were made to stage a rebellion in July, but as the authorities investigated, the date was moved to June 16. Just before the date, the rebels were revealed. Mayor James Hamilton Jr. called in the militia and it arrested 117 African-Americans. Trial evidence was brought against 79 of these, 34 of whom were sentenced to death and 37 were sold out of state. Vesey went to his death maintaining his innocence and was hanged July 2, 1822.[17]

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A plantation scene in 1860, stereograph No. 24 by S.T. Souder, Charleston, c. 1872 *(Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia)*

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Even at the time, some South Carolinians protested the trials were unfair. Some felt mass hysteria had overtaken the community. Others were certain Vesey was leading the slaves toward a revolt. Richard Wade in the Journal of Southern History offered a contemporary reconsideration of the event, saying it was a vague plan, exaggerated by "draconian slaveholders who used the hangings" to curtail any future revolts.[18]

Whatever the reality, the outcome was powerful. In the North, the response was immediate. Following the news of the thwarted revolt, the Ohio Legislature passed resolutions condemning slavery as a national evil. New York representatives urged public lands be sold and the profits used to purchase the freedom of slaves in the South. The American Colonization Society petitioned Congress for funds to transport African-American persons back to Africa.

In South Carolina, the reaction to the revolt was most intense. In the next year, a series of costly and suspicious fires erupted in Charleston. The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston was closed, the building was destroyed and its bishop, Moses Brown, was banished. The Methodist Episcopal Church, still under suspicion because of the late Bishop Coke's opposition to slavery, was again placed under scrutiny. Edwin Holland, a Charleston newspaper editor, wrote against ministers who "with the Sacred Volume of God in one hand" scatter "with the other, the firebrands of discord and destruction; and secretly dispensed among our Negro Population, the seeds of discontent and sedition."[19] The South Carolina General Assembly passed laws, tighten-

ing the noose around the lives of both slaves and free African-Americans. Anyone in South Carolina – laity or clergy – who had possessed sympathetic feelings for the slaves now felt the pressure to keep quiet.

Methodist preachers, and those of other denominations, were on the defensive because of their work among slaves. Clergy struggled to assure South Carolina leaders that the church was friendly to Southern perspectives. In 1823, Charleston Baptist pastor Dr. Richard Furman engaged in lengthy messages and wrote to the governor of South Carolina to pledge that slavery and Christianity were completely compatible according to Scripture. Methodists did much the same and said Southern slaves were better off than many European peasants and even many Northern white Americans in the cities. These were not necessarily statements made after theological and spiritual reflection; clergy made them in the heat of conflict, caught in the fear that doors to their ministry would be closed.[20]

On the heels of these disturbing events, the 1824 presidential campaign was vicious and had long-range repercussions. In the midst of economic hard times, five candidates –William Crawford, John Calhoun, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson – entered the race. Mud was slung and a duel was fought. When the election arrived, Andrew Jackson won more popular and electoral votes than any other candidate, but he did not win the necessary 51 percent majority of electoral votes. Thus, the House of Representatives voted on the top three candidates: Jackson, Adams and Crawford. House speaker Henry Clay was out of the race, but used his power to assist Adams, who was elected by the House Feb. 9, 1825.

Adams' victory shocked many, and when Adams appointed Clay as Secretary of State, Jacksonian Democrats were incensed and suspected a "corrupt bargain." The election undermined the confidence many Southerners had placed in the federal government. Yet compromise was so ingrained in the fabric of society that few persons could have foreseen the explosions to come. Methodists, like most all Americans, still felt strongly optimistic about the future.

Events of the early 1830s would prove the undoing of that optimism and unity. These events would lead directly to the Methodist outcry for Southern newspapers.

The first event was the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831. Nat Turner was a deeply religious slave who often had visions of God speaking to him. Often called "the prophet," Turner taught his fellow slaves from the Bible. He led an uprising, killing at least 55 white people in Virginia. The rebellion was put down

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within a few days, but fear was widespread. White militias organized against slaves. Virginia executed 56 slaves accused of being part of the rebellion; up to 200 African-Americans were killed by militias and mobs. Across the South, state legislators passed new laws prohibiting education of African-Americans, ending manumission laws, restricting rights of assembly and requiring white ministers to be present at African-American worship services. The gates were swinging shut. Fear left an unwillingness to hear any other viewpoint.

A second event had long-range repercussions and led directly to the founding of the *Advocate*: William Lloyd Garrison published his radical abolitionist newspaper, The Liberator, in 1831. Garrison was a prominent American abolitionist, journalist and social reformer. He pushed for "immediate emancipation" of slaves.

What had been for a generation a simmering pot on the back burner of the nation in the 1830s became a boiling cauldron. More than any other place in the nation, South Carolina was the focal point for the radical division, so it was no accident that the *Southern Christian Advocate* was based in South Carolina.

In many ways, John Calhoun mirrored what was happening in his home state. In the questionable presidential election of 1824, Calhoun was elected vice president under President Adams. However, Adams' election disillusioned Calhoun about the process, so in 1828, Calhoun worked against Adams to help elect war-hero Andrew Jackson, and Calhoun became his vice president. The election swept away the old aristocratic republic and moved the nation toward a more complete democracy. Calhoun's vision focused on a national agenda and his hopes of winning a future presidential election.

By 1829, however, Calhoun's relationship with President Jackson and with national government began to weaken. The continued debate over western lands and slavery made Southern politicians defensive. In addition, there was growing opposition in the South to tariffs set by the government in 1828. Calhoun desperately wanted to remain a national figure who could win the presidency after Jackson, but he had a growing constituency back home who threatened to nullify federal tariffs.

In the early 1830s, two groups emerged in South Carolina politics: those who wished to move slowly and work within the federal system to change the tariffs, and those who wanted immediate states' rights and free trade. As the latter group struggled to gain control of the South Carolina General Assembly, the situation turned violent. Calhoun continued to walk the line, but it grew more difficult.

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In the 1832 state election, the "Nullifiers" overran their opponents, seizing roughly 80 percent of the state's political seats. Gov. James Hamilton Jr., a key leader in the victory, called a convention to render the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 null and void in South Carolina. President Jackson responded in a militant tone, sending Navy warships to Charleston and threatening to send troops to South Carolina. In March 1833, South Carolina repealed the Ordinance of Nullification, but the tone had been set.

Calhoun was caught in the middle. He did not support the more radical elements, but he did believe in the basic tenets of states' rights. When Congress passed the Force Bill, which empowered the President to use military power to force states to obey all federal laws, Calhoun opposed it with all his political might. In the end, he lost and resigned as vice president. He was a South Carolina hero for standing up to Jackson, but his own hopes for the presidency were finished. [21] The events between 1824 and 1834, this 10-year period, changed his life, his outlook and his destiny.

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Advocate Parallels Secular History

To understand what happened in those 10 years is to understand why the *Advocate* was founded in 1837. In the same way Calhoun's life was altered, the events of that time also changed the life, outlook and destiny of Methodists in the South – especially in South Carolina. Methodists found it difficult to know how to be in the world but not of the world.

In the early 1800s – the years of revival, rapid growth and national influence – Methodists in the South were united with the larger national movement of Methodism. Southern scholar Charles Sydnor concluded that, in those early years, "the South" did not yet exist as a recognized and separate entity.[22] But in 1836, that world had changed. There was a growing feeling for a place called "the South" and that this place needed a "Southern" voice in a Southern newspaper.