MATTERS OF UNITY, TRUTH, AND MORALITY:  
SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY IN THE  
QUARTERLY REVIEW OF  
THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH,  
1847–1851  
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"Estimate things, not by their rareness, difficulty, or credit,  
but by their real importance."¹

Science and religion in the late twentieth century have an ambiguous  
relationship. Some theologians contest every scientific finding that calls  
into question biblical wisdom. The majority ignore science, considering  
it a separate realm. Another minority looks forward to the emergence of  
a new paradigm which will unite scientific and theological knowledge. What  
was the dialogue between science and religion like in antebellum southern  
Methodism during the mid-nineteenth century? Was the situation the same  
or different? Are there any perspectives that would be instructive for the  
present? To investigate these matters the Quarterly Review of the Methodist  
Episcopal Church, South (hereafter the QRS) was surveyed during a five­ 
year period, starting from 1847, the first year of its publication.

The Quarterly and the Dialogue

Inception and Character of the QRS. In his "introduction"² to the  
first volume Bishop Bascom, the first editor of the QRS, began by noting  
that he did not want the QRS to add to the body of "fleeting, ephemeral  
literature" already in existence which was doing "fearful damage to  
society." High quality periodical literature, however, could make new, im­  
portant ideas available to the literate masses, who in turn influenced the  
iliterate through their close association, an educational enterprise "in­  
dispensable to political and national safety." He took for granted "the  
recognition and just supremacy of Christian principle, in our literature"  
which included theology, literature, arts, and science. He wanted to avoid  
articles that "mirror the reigning passions . . . instead of an honest and  
earnest contention for truths and principles, little, if at all, influenced by  
the changes and passions of the moment."

The QRS was in no sense to be a partisan journal. The issue of slavery  
would never be mentioned except when defense against fanatics was called  
for through their prior attacks and misrepresentations. The QRS, in this

¹Lord Bacon, quoted on the faceplate of every volume of the QRS.
²QRS 1/1 (1847), 7–24.
period, maintained an affirmation of the biblical view of one set of original parents for all, when it would have provided more support for slavery to entertain the newer scientific view of multiple sets of parents.  

Bascom wanted the *QRS* to be a church-sponsored journal modeled after similar quarterly reviews of the day (*Edinburgh Review* and *The London Quarterly Review*, for instance), the first of its kind in the south. It was to be a "general review of important subjects, rather than critical censorship." "We would have the work a school of instruction, rather than a literary tribunal."

The *QRS*, along with other educational periodicals, reflected the general diffusion of knowledge during this period, including the popularizing of science, which was part of the process of American democratization, the rising status of skilled craftsman and a middle class in an industrial society, and the overall progressive movement toward a better model of life in a new world.

The *QRS* reveals a strong, vibrant, competent intellectual tradition that assumed the importance and naturalness of the dialogue of science and religion without question. This contradicts the common stereotype of southern Methodism characterized by revivalism, camp meetings, uneducated lay preachers, the romantic reaction against eighteenth century rationalism, Deism, and formalism, and the Wesleyan evangelical appeal to intuition and religious experience.

Overall, a reading of the *QRS* supports Holifield's thesis that the antebellum south, cities and towns especially, were populated by clergymen who viewed themselves as apostles of the unity of truth, as architects of rational cosmologies and reasonable psychologies, (which) sought to

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integrate the whole of society—from the internal life of the individual to the impersonal structures of the state—into a harmonious cosmos governed by omniscient wisdom.\textsuperscript{5}

**Natural Theology and the Unity of Truth.** The pages of the *QRS* reveal that natural theology was in its heyday. The works of Newton, Butler and Paley were held in the highest regard along with the firm belief in the correspondence of the two Divine Books of Nature and Revelation. It was rife with discussions concerning the origins and history of the universe stimulated by such ideas as Sir John Herschel’s nebular theory and with the implications of the “new geology” represented in such works as Sir Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830).\textsuperscript{6}

Reason was unquestionably dominant in the *QRS’s* pages, over against any form of anti-intellectual, emotional appeal. In particular, it was reason, logic, and mathematics firmly grounded in the Baconian, Scottish Common Sense Realism school which fostered the belief that religion and science could be quite compatible. Both pointed in their own ways to the great Designer-Lawgiver.\textsuperscript{7} Educated clergy could and should be quite knowledgeable of both.

Facts reigned supreme, realistic facts. There was little sympathy for forms of idealism. German Rationalism as well as Bishop Berkeley were often denounced. There was no conception that facts and principles could be anything like useful fictions. Facts reflected the reality of the world, so the stakes were high in debating conflicting views. All scientific views were considered no better than the solid facts from which they were induced. Truth with a capital “T” was what was in question. Truth was sought with integrity within the pages of the *QRS*, in that opposing positions were

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always spelled out clearly, at length, and often in the opponents' own words before a challenging response was made.

There was a strong presumption of the unity of all truth. Again, facts were worth debating, and they were, since an established, unquestionable scientific fact could, for most authors, call into question conflicting biblical views.

Optimism, however, was the main sentiment of the day. The God hypothesis best fit the existing data of science. Order, design, lawful behavior, and progressive development simply could not be accounted for through original atoms interacting through chance alone.

The great harmony of the wisest philosophers of these latter days will roll on the perpetual song, in the temple of God and of science: there is a great first cause, which is God! 8

Many times before, QRS writers affirmed, various infidels had imagined that so-called facts called into question biblical revelation. But further, in-depth research had always turned the tide and brought science around to confirming the faith. This was the common view. The anonymously written Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation was seen as a good example of the misuse of a young, immature, ever changing science in this mid-century period. Footprints of the Creator by Hugh Miller was held up as a good example of a more mature scientific work coming back around to shore up the faith. 9 In one review of Footprints the article began by noting, "If geology in its youth appeared to antagonize Divine Revelation, in its manhood it has become its advocate."

Its periods and its formations have been found in harmony with the Mosaic cosmogony, and its discoveries have become a weapon of defence against the assaults of a specious infidelity. The development hypothesis, originating with Maillet and Lamarck, recently revived, and especially in the hands of the author of the "Vestiges of Creation," has gained considerable popularity, and is working mischief by its plausible and insidious poison. . . . The "Footprints" has deprived the "Vestiges" of all support from geology, and knocked one important cog forever out of the wheel of scientific unbelief. 10

The same claim was made for archeology. 11

8"Philosophical Atheism—An argument based upon the true principles of the Inductive Philosophy, in favor of the existence of God; in opposition to the theory of Atoms, Nebulous Matter, Chance, and Accident, of ancient and modern Atheists," QRS III/1 (1849), 169.


Virginity, Morality, & Determinism. Most of the published faith was masculine. One woman author, Mary Somerville, was reviewed as a credible scientific expert, well known in the scientific world, and "able to tread the loftiest summits of science."\(^\text{12}\)

In terms of women, there was concern expressed in a number of articles for female modesty and virtue as the center of stable culture. "Female virtue is one of the chief pillars of the social fabric, and it should be strictly protected."\(^\text{13}\)

The concern for protecting virginity was an example of the fundamental concern for morality. Truth was one, and one idea had definite implications for others. QRS writers could not deal with science as a separate area of its own. The very fabric of society was at stake.\(^\text{14}\) While it might seem unseemly to think of oneself evolving from lower forms of organic life, the real issue at stake was the moral reality of the universe. What raised red flags and immediately induced debate were scientific theories that tended toward materialistic reductionism, that is, the riddance of a Moral Governor from the universe and the riddance of freedom of will in human affairs.

Professor D. Martindale wrote that among the charges which religion has made against geology are, that it turns God out of his own universe, and substitutes in place of the Omnipotent and all wise Creator, a blind and irresponsible law. . . . Freedom of the human will is done away with.

Sin became physical disease, "faulty electrical conduction."\(^\text{15}\) Bishop David Seth Doggett, D.D., who became editor of the QRS after Bascom died in 1850, wrote\(^\text{16}\) that necessity had always been the linchpin of the atheist case against religion, which is why Butler and others needed to refute it.


\(^{13}\) "The Necessity of General and Special Education, in Connection with the Progressive Spirit of the Age.—Unsigned," QRS 1/4 (1847), 510-543.


\(^{15}\) "Footprints of the Creator (reviewed) by Prof. D. Martindale, Centenary College, Louisiana," QRS V/4 (1851), 489-516.

\(^{16}\) "Chalmers and Butler on Philosophical Necessity—By the editor," QRS V/2 (1851), 212-235.
These Christian authors had no problem with evolutionary theories, as long as they were commentaries on divine providence, as long as science resulted in doxology. Most authors affirmed, with little qualification, the progressive spirit of the age, which they simply attributed to divine agency. What they could not tolerate were deterministic theories ruled by inevitable, immoral laws of chance. They assumed ahead of time that something must be wrong, if that was what was propounded. Sin and moral responsibility had to remain as viable categories.

Biblical Stances and Accommodations to Science. Only one author out of the total was willing to affirm the Bible as the first and last word, make a case from biblical principles, not look to science for any support, and simply assume science would fall in line when given enough time to get its act together. This was not an escapist author, but one very familiar with Darwin and the scientific thought of the day, probably Joshua Soule, D.D., the senior Bishop of the M. E. Church, South. Soule rejected groups who believed the Bible was simply an allegory, or fiction;—a beautiful mythos often indulged in by other oriental writers in the openings of their respective histories . . . (as well as those who believed) it does not accord with the living volume of nature so that the usual interpretation needs modifying or more facts need to be found before a good harmonization can be had. . . .

(The Bible's view of the primeval condition) bears its own evidence upon the face of it, and needs no foreign arguments to support its claims to our confidence. Reason is the mere repercussion of revelation on this momentous subject.

Neither Luther, Calvin, or Wesley were biblical literalists. Still, for the QRS the Bible must be closely studied as to its intent in any given passage, including those dealing with matters of creation, history, anthropology, or psychology. Again, the Bible was not just important as a document of faith, but because it contained sound intellectual facts and principles which should be studied in public schools.

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18References to "probable" authors are made when there is a reasonable correspondence between initialed articles and information provided in the *Cyclopaedia of Methodism*, Matthew S. Simpson, ed. (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881).
19"Thoughts on the Primeval Condition of Man—Signed J. S., Maryland," QRS II/1 (1948), 24.
21For instance, "The Necessity of General and Special Education." The Protestant hegemony was strong enough to allow this suggestion. As Marsden points out in "Politics, Religion, and American History," *The Reformed Journal* 38/10 (1988), 11-16, religious toleration in early America was never brought about because religion was not important, but because it was too important, and there were too many conflicting views of it to forge a political consensus around.
The majority of authors set aside any rejection or withdrawal from the world of science and culture. They considered it embarrassing that religious people would attack science as such and not attempt to challenge scientific findings and pagan interpretations on their own grounds. The reviewer of a book on geology by The Rev. David King, LL.D. noted that King took the ground,

that we must meet all objections to Divine Revelation, apparent and real, fully and fairly, and patiently and calmly await the results. More injury has been done to religion, than good has been realized, by timidly recoiling from the progress of discovery. A truly courageous and philosophic spirit would immediately dissolve half of the illusions of a yet immature science, and put us on the vantage ground with regard to the rest. 22

QRS writers differed a little in how soon or how much one could or should accommodate or harmonize scripture and science, but they agreed that facts would win out and that in the end the facts would support the thesis of a first cause Creator and a wise, benevolent ongoing Governor of an orderly universe. The majority of writers made some accommodation of the six days of biblical creation to a theory of a day equalling an era in God’s time. Others expressed more caution, as did the author of a review article on the nebular theory.

I would beg our Christian brethren to be slow in accommodating the scriptures to the discoveries of science. We should never do this in regard to any branch of science which is only in its infancy. Let it mature, and when its principles have become fixed and inflexible, then if they seem to conflict with scripture, show if you can how they may be harmonized. Nothing is more likely to bring the scriptures into discredit, than an imposing and beautiful accommodation of revelation to the discoveries of a science overthrown and rendered ridiculous by some new discovery, which shows that the science itself was faulty. . . . Science is yet in its infancy. . . . Geology has yet too many difficulties of her own to settle before I can submit the scriptures to her correction. 23

The confidence of QRS writers reflected the period of Protestant hegemony in almost all areas of life, and the concurring faith of a number of pious scientists of the day and of the past such as Bacon, Boyle, Locke, Pascal and Lyttleton, and many other scientists who were clergy as well. Most authors were entranced and enthralled by the advances of science. In one article the unspecified author said,

Science, which is another name for knowledge in a systematic form, can alone elevate us (religion excepted) to the true dignity of our nature—can alone emancipate us from the thraldom of sense; by the inspiration of better hopes, and a relish for higher enjoyments. . . . Patience of enquiry, a love of truth for its own sake and the faculty

23 "The Nebular Theory—The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, (unsigned)" QRS II/4 (1848), 505–506.
of abstraction in a high degree, are the magic means by which to open the doors of the temple of science.\textsuperscript{24}

No author was so enthralled, however, that he was willing to explain away biblical miracles through natural causes. If God was truly transcendent, and not simply another name for the forces of nature, then the possibility must remain open that God could intervene in the laws of nature, through which he normally governed, to perform a miracle for some religious, moral purpose.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Intellect and Education}. Some writers acknowledged that winning a rational argument would not convert people as much as addressing them on an experiential heart level. It was possibly William Henry Anderson who noted\textsuperscript{26} the difference between eighteenth century skeptics who demanded external proof of Christianity and nineteenth century skeptics who were not moved internally or aesthetically by Christianity, though they wished they were.\textsuperscript{27} He maintained that intellectual arguments never won over a skeptic. Still, he held no sympathy for those who would ignore or disrupt scientific and cultural progress.

For Anderson, as for nearly all other \textit{QRS} writers, the importance of intellectual attainments could hardly be underestimated in this era. True intellect was associated with progress in general, with democracy, with spirituality and the image of God, with morality, with expedient, practical, common sense thinking, and mental health. True intellect was the greatest weapon in the constant fight to conquer the influence of sensual, bodily, emotional, unruly, unhealthy passions.\textsuperscript{28} Rationality had radically cut down what was once the infinite distance between Creator and creatures. The doctrine of original sin was rarely mentioned. In general, the summary judgment of Robert Chiles on the theological transition underway in nineteenth century American Methodism away from its eighteenth century Methodist roots was confirmed:

Scriptural revelation was compromised by reason's concern for evidence and logical implications; man was identified in terms of his moral capacity rather than by his

\textsuperscript{24} "The Tendency of Science to Correct the Sensualism of Civilization," \textit{QRS} I/1 (1847), 102–103.

\textsuperscript{25} Cf. "Infidelity and Miracles—signed 'A,'" \textit{QRS} I/1 (1847), 110–134.

\textsuperscript{26} "Thoughts on the Infidelity of the Nineteenth Century—Signed W. A., Athens, Georgia," \textit{QRS} IV/2 (1850), 185–205.

\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Robert Fuller, \textit{Americans and the Unconscious} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) for an extended discussion of American aesthetic spirituality from the time of Jonathan Edwards on that valued religion without the church.

\textsuperscript{28} Though Wesley himself was quite rational, logical, and tempered in his passions, he preserved a healthier regard for mind-body holism, as well as heartfelt experience, than the majority of these antebellum \textit{QRS} writers. Cf. Harold Vanderpool, "The Wesleyan-Methodist Tradition," in \textit{Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Tradition} Ronald Numbers and Darrel Amundsen, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 327.
captive in sin; and the sovereignty of God's grace in salvation was qualified by man's intrinsic freedom.\textsuperscript{29}

The author of an article on mathematics who signed as "X" asserted, "Man was created, intellectually, in the image of uncreated, essential Omniscience." The obscured image was recovered as mathematical science introduced not mere \textit{notions}, but \textit{perfect intellecctions} which lead to knowledge "of the principles which hold the Universe in equilibrium."

Here, be it reverently said, the human mind, to the extent of its range, coincides with the divine mind; as a right line of finite extent, coincides throughout that extent, with another of infinite length. The truths of mathematics . . . are as fully known to him as they are known to Omniscience; they are possessions common to created and uncreated intelligence—immutable and eternal as the foundations of Fate itself. In the measure in which man possesses these essential truths, he is, intellectually, in the image of his Maker. . . . [Mathematical truths clear] up many of the mysteries of Providence, (shed) illumination on the page of Revelation itself, [and make one] a better Christian for being a mathematician.\textsuperscript{30}

It followed from such extravagant testimonials to the importance of intellectual achievement, that education was fundamental. It was the key to continuing progress, happiness, and democracy. The QRS was explicitly dedicated to the increase and diffusion of knowledge to the masses. While biblical knowledge was assumed as important educationally, the QRS's grounding in natural theology led it naturally to review and recommend all sorts of works on physical geography, meteorology, astronomy, physics, mathematics, geology, archeology, and logic.

In one article, the unspecified author made a case for special education to the overly smart and the overly slow, both of whom can have educational difficulties. He pleaded for remedial education in prisons and mad-houses.

A proper educational training will generally correct the unbalanced mind. . . . We may modify and measurably \textit{re-make} the innate dispositions of our citizens. . . . Man is not all evil. . . . Man has two forces: the vital force, by virtue of which he is an animal; and the intellectual force, by virtue of which he is something more. . . . The intellectual force is the dominant principle, and has the power of keeping in subjection the motions of the vital force, and of calling back any aberrations of the mind; and when an individual fails to exercise this controlling force, he is in a state of mental alienation.\textsuperscript{31}

Bishop Doggett made a case that one of the first practical results of learning, whether formally or informally gained,\textsuperscript{32} was that it corrected


\textsuperscript{30}"Dignity and Importance of Mathematical Science—signed 'X'," \textit{QRS} 1/1 (1847), 31–34.

\textsuperscript{31}"The Necessity of General and Special Education," 539.

\textsuperscript{32}See E. Brooks Holifield, "The Strain of Moving Up; Profession, Social Class and Ministry," \textit{Ministry \& Mission} 14/1 (1988), 1–12, for an account of how ministry functioned as an
many false impressions gained when young. Induction, since Bacon, had to be based on facts tested thoroughly through experimental means. Certainly education should be practical and useful in the service of humankind. It should reap high honor in “alleviating the miseries of mankind, and in dispersing the gloom of human sorrow.” Furthermore, though “nature's great volume has, as yet, been but partially and imperfectly read,” there is an inevitable law of progress at work on a “plan of creation” which both science and religion confirm. To find one's place in the plan of creation and fit in with this progress,

the most effectual aid in accomplishing one's intellectual destiny, is the reverent study of the sacred Scriptures. An infidel slang formerly consigned them to the vulgar as unsuited to the tastes or capacities of the wise. The progress of science has triumphantly vindicated them from this odium, evinced their supremacy and their peculiar adaptation to enlightened minds. The science of the Bible is beyond doubt the unity and the end of all sciences. It is the central science, towards which all others are rapidly converging, and into which they will all finally merge their respective pretensions. The Bible, like the ocean, will receive all their tributary streams into its bosom.33

For an educated nation, a free press was essential. Censorship, however, was also assumed necessary.

It becomes the nation to establish a censorship over our literature, to suppress the principles of atheism—infidelity—romance—religious and political jacobinism,—all of which inevitably tend to sap the foundation of our confederacy.34

Consensus and Diversity. Within these broad outlines of consensus the QRS allowed a certain diversity of opinions to stand side by side. Some authors were quite enamored with the undereducated and/or disease model of problem behavior.

The predisposition to crime is, of itself, prime facie evidence of diseased cerebral structure. . . [It is] as philosophical to hang a man for catching the small-pox . . . [as it is to hang a murderer who is] the subject of a diseased brain. . . . Whipping never yet made the rogue an honest man.35

Others held more tightly to the traditional sin/personal responsibility model, though everyone was optimistic about the power and necessity of education for the general public and appalled at statistics related to illiteracy.

Some were completely convinced of the law of inevitable progress and the perfectibility of human beings. The author “X” passionately believed entrance into higher social orders during this period, and how university graduates were choosing ministry as a career less and less. “In the early eighteenth century, for example, over 50% of Yale graduates had chosen the ministry; by 1821 the figure dropped to 31%; by 1861, it fell further to 15%” (1).

33“Destiny of the Educated by the Editor,” QRS V/1 (1851), 156.
34“Ibid. The Necessity of General and Special Education.”
35Ibid.
“in what, qualifiedly, may be called the perfectibility of man,” which no resistance will prevail against. There is a “spark of Divinity overwhelmed in the ruins of the first Temple of the Soul that seeks its egress into the light of heaven.” Education brings out the powers of the mind and leads to true happiness. Others were more cautious about what a biblically fallen humanity could achieve, though everyone affirmed the general trend toward greater progress and enlightened development. A different author from “X” argued that the progress of civilization was ambiguous as opposed to an unmixed good.

The very agencies by which we hope to rise superior to the assault of the elements of mischief which environ us, are almost invariably the occasion of new disorders in the social system.

For instance, new remedies for diseases often originate new diseases. In addition,

the weakness and fatuity of man must forever preclude us from reaching that perfectibility of which, man viewed abstractedly, has sometimes been deemed capable. . . . Those who look for a political millennium will as surely be disappointed as those who sought for the philosopher’s stone.

While some authors called into question the morality of the culture which was increasingly centered around the self, most authors went along with the general trend toward valuing the individual. One author differed explicitly with William E. Channing for embracing the Kantian epistemological subject/object split that ended in Channing affirming that the aim of life is “to perfect the self.”

For, according to him, self-culture—self perfection is the mark of our high calling; we are to cultivate self not benefit others—to perfect self not bind up the broken hearted. . . . [In contrast] We believe the great end of life is the performance of duty in which is self-sacrifice. . . . In the strife for self perfection, duties to our fellows would be neglected or become only the means to the end. . . . [It would be a] refined epicureanism. . . . Not self perfection, but man’s happiness should be the great end of our being. Self should be swallowed up in the thought of humanity.

This was a “high utilitarianism” at the foundation of both Socrates and Christ.

A number of authors were willing to rest their faith completely on the results of scientific research, while a minority stood firmly behind biblical

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36 "Dignity and Importance of Mathematical Science."
37 "The Tendency of Science to Correct the Sensualism of Civilization—Unsigned," QRS I/1 (1847), 90-109.
principles with the faith that science would just need to take its time and eventually eat its hat before coming around to what was true. One author expressed doubt that science was as yet on firm ground. However, he was willing to take seriously firm research. To scientists he said:

Now if you will let my principles alone till you place your own beyond dispute, I will be equally courteous to you. Let us therefore be at peace until you shall have made your principles impregnable, and then if they do not agree with mine, I will accommodate mine to yours if it can be fairly done, and if it cannot be, I will fling mine away. This is the proper course. Let us throw no obstacles in the way of science, but at the same time let us take care of being too accommodating to her. No doubt she will direct us to the true interpretation of passages of scripture which without her lights it would be impossible for us to understand. . . . Suppose the nebular theory were true, we would now understand the expression, "the earth was without form and void". . . . Science may not only cast light upon the scriptures, but correct many false readings of them.40

The main criteria for publishing these diverse scientific contributions in the QRS seems to have been whether they in some way promoted religious assurance. Wesley himself was rarely mentioned.41 Still, the Wesleyan values of a rational, logical, biblically centered faith, of plain talk for plain people, of active, useful service in the world, and the religion of the heart were apparent throughout, though the references to the heart and emotional aspects of faith were minimal.

Impact and Summary

In terms of the future, it is clear that the QRS of the 1847–1851 era would not be surprised or taken off guard by the publication of Darwin’s The Origin of Species in 1859. QRS writers were thoroughly familiar with the science of the day, with Darwin himself, and his basic thesis. The Origin would simply add a new twist into an ongoing discussion.

Since, however, there was such a strong commitment to the unity of realistic truth and reference to demonstrable facts, the coming crisis could be seen on the horizon. The QRS of the early 1850s would feel betrayed when so many scientists were convinced by the cogency of Darwin’s argument, would take comfort in certifiable scientists who still deferred, would be alarmed when the weight of the intellectual world turned toward naturalistic determinism, would have to ponder and weigh a number of new liberal, theological accommodations to the turn of events, and would eventually find itself in the unfamiliar place of defensively assuming a minority position as the Protestant hegemony began to crack at a number of places.

41 In his article “Our Journal—The Prospect Before Us,” QRS II/1 (1848), 5–20 Bishop Bascom distinguishes between elite ministers who had Bacon, Butler, Foster, and Isaac Taylor on their shelves, and those who were less educated and only read Wesley, Doddridge, Baxter, and Bunyan.
A main defensive tool that would surely continue into later discussions would be the insistence that scientific theories are indeed only hypotheses that must always provide incontestable facts for their support.\textsuperscript{42} This scenario, of course, completely leaves out the dominating and devastating reality of the Civil War and Reconstruction. However, even given a Civil War, the first five years of the \textit{QRS} would predict the resurrection of an elite intellectual tradition of some kind following the war and its aftermath.

The word “elite” suggests a wide split within southern Methodism that should be mentioned, along with comments about how far reaching the influence of the \textit{QRS} might have been. It is doubtful the \textit{QRS} directly touched many people, though it was part of the populist periodical movement of the times aimed at educating the masses. The readership was small.\textsuperscript{43} References to issues of religion and science in published sermons were highly infrequent.\textsuperscript{44} Plus, references in published sermons do not accurately reflect what average congregations hear on average Sundays.\textsuperscript{45}

On the other hand, institutions of higher learning that would subscribe to such periodicals as the \textit{QRS} were on the rise in the south,\textsuperscript{46} and the gist of what is taught at the elite levels, does have a way of working its way into common knowledge, as Bascom hoped, even if a twenty-five year


\textsuperscript{43}After five years around 4,000 volumes were sold out of a pool of 2,500 ordained clergy and over 500,000 lay preachers and parishioners in the MECS alone. Bascom’s comment in “Our Journal—The Prospect Before Us,” should be kept in mind that the north and south together never supported the northern \textit{QR} very well and that publishing in general has taken a back seat to the concerns of the MECS for organizing itself and responding to northern interference with the Plan of Separation. It is not clear how different the south is from the north here in a literary-educational sense, though Bascom freely admits that publishing has been pretty much the exclusive domain of the north in the first half of the century. However George Daniels, \textit{American Science in the Age of Jackson}, Sally Kohlstedt, “Savants and Professionals: The American Association for the Advancement of Science 1848–1860,” in \textit{The Pursuit of Knowledge in the Early American Republic}, A. Oleson and S. C. Brown, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), and Numbers and Numbers, “Science and Religion in the Old South” make it clear through statistical studies that the south was relatively, though not essentially, less scientific when compared with the north.

\textsuperscript{44}Cf. the first years of \textit{The Southern Pulpit}, begun in 1848 by the scientifically minded Charles F. Deems who also founded the American Institute of Christian Philosophy to investigate the relationship between science and religion.


time lag must be allowed. In addition, Holifield has documented well his thesis that towns and cities put much higher value on educated, sophisticated sermons than the more rural areas. Numbers and Numbers also demonstrate statistically that it was urban areas as opposed to agricultural ones that attracted and supported scientific enterprises. This best explains the lag in scientific accomplishments between the south and the north, along with the issues of southern physical and intellectual isolation combined with oppressive heat and humidity.

Overall, southern Methodism cannot be said to have been the main leader in the science and religion dialogue since it contributed fewer leaders and scientists than its percentage of overall churchgoers would predict. In total, however, the QRS published some 23 out of 152 articles (15%) during its first five years that entered into the dialogue of science and theology. Furthermore, it reviewed some 16 books dealing primarily with science alone.

To check a comparison, the writer reviewed the table of contents of fifteen editions of the Quarterly Review published by The United Methodist Church between 1981 and 1985 (a review dedicated more narrowly to scholarly reflection on ministry, as opposed to the QRS's more general audience) and found no articles and no book reviews related to science and religion. The contrast between the two Reviews is stark. There are no more savants freely dabbling in science and religion more than a century later as Landon Gilkey and others have noted. In the 1980s, and long before, religion and science have been firmly separated, both taken to reflecting more on the basis of their own foundations.

From one perspective this has been a helpful development. The church has developed more humility. It no longer assumes "that any fool with common sense" can see that Christianity is the one, logical, rational system of truth to embrace. Theology no longer seeks to use the methods of physical science to do its own work, thereby inescapably being caught in a reductionism which does not value the realm of the spiritual in its own right. Today the nature of faith is more critically discussed in terms of the church's unique foundations. Likewise, the church is much more aware of its boundaries with society and how it can both separate from and merge with the status quo of the culture. Science is allowed to investigate freely, without hindrance from religious-social constraints, while at the same time being aware that it too uses figurative, metaphorical language in its theories.

On the other hand, many church people today experience fundamental splits in their lives. They go to church, immersing themselves in language that makes the universe seem personal and purposeful, and then go to

47 "Science and Religion in the Old South," 172-173.
48 "Science and Theology in the Old South," 131.
49 "Science and Religion in the Old South," 184.
carry out their work-lives in a context informed by a separate science, ruled by an impersonal set of probabilities and strategies without any meaning other than what a company chooses to assign them, perhaps simply the maximizing of short term profits. Clearly, the split between scientific technology and values in such areas as nuclear weapons and modern medicine is dangerous and raises questions of values and relationships.

The alive, high-stakes, mutually informed dialogue between religion and science of the 1850's, based on the assumption of the unity of truth, has an appeal and a promise that is important to any religion that emphasizes the incarnation of the Divine and the interconnectedness of all life. QRS writers observing the contemporary scene would encourage science and theology to look at each other again, and perhaps explore the possibility of a new kind of relationship based on a higher degree of humility, and on an openness to the multiple forms the dialogue might take.\(^{50}\)