

SECONDARY SOURCE PACKET #2-Defending Slavery

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THE EMERGENCE OF PROSLAVERY THOUGHT

In the years immediately following the Revolution, slaveowners began to offer defenses of slavery. For the first time, a defense of slavery seemed necessary. Before the Revolution, there was no need to defend slavery per se. As one more level of social status in the British Empire, slavery fit perfectly well into a society built on hierarchy. But with hierarchy under attack, American masters had to develop some explanation for why they continued to hold slaves. During the Revolution, the British intellectual Samuel Johnson asked, "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" The move toward abolition in the North suggested that some Americans agreed with the implications of Johnson's question. The onus was now on the slaveowners of the new nation to answer that question.

Fittingly, perhaps, as well as ironically, the most important early defense of the institution came from a man most remembered for his articulation of the rights of man and the fundamental importance of liberty: Thomas Jefferson. Equally ironic was the defense of slavery that developed at the Philadelphia Convention in 1787, which drafted a national constitution for a "free people."

Jefferson's Defense of Slavery

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson had set out, unintentionally perhaps, the argument for abolition: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

A few years after drafting the Declaration, Jefferson developed the outlines of a number of important proslavery arguments that countered his assertions of equality. While Jefferson was often ambivalent about slavery and condemned it when writing letters to known opponents of the institution, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* he used arguments based on history, science, political theory, practical necessity, and, most of all, race to justify the continued enslavement of Africans. In the nineteenth century, numerous defenders of slavery would elaborate on the themes that Jefferson had set out.

Jefferson argued in the *Notes* that blacks were inherently inferior to whites in their mental abilities and their moral virtues. He would not speculate on whether blacks were “originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances,” but whatever the cause, he asserted that they were “inferior to the whites in . . . body and mind.” He claimed that he had never found a black who “had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never seen an elementary trait of painting or sculpture.” He found “no poetry” among blacks. Jefferson conceded that blacks were brave, but this “may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought, which prevents their seeing a danger till it be present.” He offered pseudo-scientific theories of race, speculating that blackness might come “from the color of the blood” or that black women might breed with the “Oranootan.” He asserted, without offering any proof, that black men preferred white women as their sexual partners. But their sexuality, like everything else about blacks, was less human and more animalistic. “They are more ardent after their female,” he wrote, “but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient.” Indeed, he found that

in general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection. To this must be ascribed their disposition to sleep when abstracted from their diversions, and unemployed in labour. An animal whose body is at rest, and who does not reflect, must be disposed to sleep of course. Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous.

Initiating a historical argument that would become a mainstay of proslavery thought, Jefferson noted that ancient Rome had also been a slaveholding society. However, Jefferson noted that many Roman slaves achieved great accomplishments because “they were of the race of whites”; American slaves could never achieve such distinction because they were not white.

Being unequal, blacks could never, in Jefferson’s mind, survive in competition with whites. At the time, free black men could vote in the states surrounding Virginia: Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina. Nevertheless, Jefferson fervently believed that blacks could never be the political equals of whites and must never be allowed to vote or to participate in public life. As Jefferson saw it, if emancipated, former slaves would become a permanent class of peasants or serfs. This would undermine American democracy. Thus Jefferson asserted that if slavery were to end, the slaves themselves would have to be exiled, perhaps sent to the Caribbean, Africa, or some remote part of the American continent.

Jefferson justified such a wholesale removal of African Americans on two grounds. First, he asserted that the “deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the

injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made” would lead to “the extermination of the one or the other race.” To avoid this race war, Jefferson thought it was necessary to ship all ex-slaves, and indeed all free blacks, out of the country. He also feared that if free blacks stayed in the United States, they might intermarry with whites. This, Jefferson believed, would lead to “staining the blood” of the master class. Thus even if there were no race war, Jefferson asserted that blacks, if freed, had “to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.”

But if this happened, who would then do the work necessary to maintain the American economy? Jefferson fully understood that slaves provided the labor that made the Southern economy possible. He suggested that the nation might import European workers and remove slaves, but he realized the utter impracticality of this. Europeans were unwilling to come to America as exploited laborers, and the nation had neither the money nor the ships to send its black population back to Africa or even to some closer foreign destination. Moreover, Jefferson understood that most Southern masters were unwilling to part with their slaves and the lifestyle that came with being a master.

Jefferson’s fears of either a race war or the opposite, interracial love and marriage, combined with the need for brute labor, led to this early and incredibly important defense of slavery. Jefferson’s *Notes* contain four proslavery themes: First, since antiquity slavery had been an accepted social and economic institution in all of the great nations of the world, including Rome and Greece. Second, ending slavery would lead to chaos and destruction of civilized society. Third, the Southern economy depended on slave labor, and there was really no viable alternative to this labor. Finally, blacks were genetically inferior to whites and at the same time innately predisposed to sexual immorality. They were, in essence, a dangerous class that had to be controlled at all times. Slavery was obviously the most effective, most efficient, and most profitable way to control the Africans and their descendants living in the United States.

Proslavery Arguments at the Constitutional Convention

Like Jefferson, the Southern delegates to the Constitutional Convention articulated a number of defenses of slavery that would later be developed by proslavery theorists in the antebellum period. Just a few years after Jefferson wrote his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, delegates from South Carolina and other slave states at the Constitutional Convention offered a series of defenses of slavery, setting out why the Constitution had to protect slavery and the slave trade. In a closed convention where the delegates were sworn to secrecy, there was relatively little need for political posturing. The delegates also probably had little expectation that they could change any minds on the morality of slavery. Thus they offered, for the most part, practical, economic, political, and historical arguments in favor of slavery. In many ways, these were the South’s strongest arguments—along with the racial ones that Jefferson pioneered—in the long debate over slavery. In essence, the proslavery

delegates did not ask their Northern colleagues to support slavery, to like it, or even to acknowledge that it was morally legitimate. Instead, they set out why, from a practical standpoint, it was in the self-interest of Northerners to accept and even to protect slavery.

One of the most vocal defenders of slavery at the Convention was Charles Pinckney of South Carolina. He asserted that there was “a solid distinction as to interest between the southern and northern states.” He noted that the Carolinas and Georgia “in their Rice and Indigo had a peculiar interest which might be sacrificed” if they did not have sufficient power in any new Congress.³⁹ In a later debate, Pinckney’s more famous cousin, General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, declared that the South did not require “a majority of representatives” in Congress, “but [he] wished them to have something like an equality.” Otherwise, the Southern states would “be nothing more than overseers for the Northern States.” Similarly, Hugh Williamson of North Carolina argued that if the North had a majority in Congress, “the Southern Interest must be extremely endangered.”⁴⁰ Later, Pierce Butler of South Carolina claimed that “the labour of a slave in South Carolina was as productive and valuable as that of a freeman in Massachusetts” and that because the national government “was instituted principally for the protection of property,” slaves should be counted for representation.⁴¹ Even Virginia’s Edmund Randolph, who “lamented that such a species of property existed,” nevertheless “urged strenuously that express security ought to be provided for including slaves in the ratio of Representation.”⁴²

The Southern delegates also made clear that the alternative to denying representation for slavery was an end to the Union. William R. Davie warned that his state, North Carolina, would “never confederate” unless slaves were counted for representation and that if slaves were not counted for apportionment, “the business [of the Convention] was at an end.”⁴³

The threat of disunion, which would mark proslavery political thought until 1861, was also apparent during the debate over the slave trade. South Carolina’s John Rutledge told the Convention that the “true question at present is whether the Southern States shall or shall not be parties to the Union.” The implied threat of secession was clear. He then told the Northern delegates that if they would “consult their interest,” they would “not oppose the increase of slaves which will increase the commodities of which they will become the carriers.”⁴⁴ General Pinckney also argued that if the Constitution failed to protect the slave trade, his “personal influence . . . would be of no avail towards obtaining the assent” of his home state in favor of the Constitution. Shifting from the implied threat of political instability, Pinckney then reiterated the economic argument. More slaves would produce more goods, and that result would help not only the South, but also Northern states involved in “the carrying trade.” Pinckney declared that a prohibition of the slave trade would be “an exclusion of S. Carolina from the Union,” because “S. Carolina and Georgia cannot do without slaves.” General Pinckney’s younger cousin, Charles Pinckney, argued on the basis of history that there was nothing wrong with

slavery and, citing ancient Rome and Greece, declared that slavery was “justified by the example of all the world.”⁴⁵

The arguments here were clear: The economic interests of the South, based on slavery, had to have special protection in the Constitution. This was an early version of the assertions that “Cotton Is King” and that no power in the world could make war on cotton. Here, in a pre-cotton economy, Southerners were simply arguing that the contributions of slavery to the national economy were so great that the rest of the nation could not live without slavery and therefore had to give slavery special constitutional protections. A number of clauses of the Constitution, including the three-fifths clause, the provision for the electoral college, the protection of the African slave trade, and the fugitive slave clause, would eventually do this.

There was, of course, a logical inconsistency in these arguments. If cotton or tobacco or any other slavery-based product had truly been “king,” then no politicians would have dared attack it. However, the point of these economic arguments was always to warn the opponents of slavery that attacks on the institution would be very costly.

With such arguments, the Southern delegates, like Jefferson, ably defended their most important economic and social institution. They set out what would become major themes of proslavery thought: that slavery had been a prominent institution in the great societies of the classical period; that all the world allowed and supported slavery; that slavery was vital to the national economy; and most importantly, that the very survival of the national Union depended on great deference being shown to slavery.

The Founding and the Need for a Proslavery Argument

In summing up the entire Constitution, General Pinckney, who had been one of the ablest defenders of slavery at the Convention, proudly told the South Carolina House of Representatives:

We have a security that the general government can never emancipate them, for no such authority is granted and it is admitted, on all hands, that the general government has no powers but what are expressly granted by the Constitution, and that all rights not expressed were reserved by the several states.⁴⁶

This powerful South Carolina planter boasted, “In short, considering all circumstances, we have made the best terms for the security of this species of property it was in our power to make. We would have made better if we could; but on the whole, I do not think them bad.”⁴⁷

Pinckney was of course correct. The Constitution he helped create protected slavery in numerous ways. But it also created the seeds of a new and powerful threat to slavery, especially when combined with the

libertarian ideology of the Revolution. In a stronger, "more perfect Union," the interests of the slave states would have to be balanced against those of the free states and against the interests of the nation as a whole. Moreover, as part of a federal Union, South Carolina and other slave states would have to contend with the ideas and beliefs of Americans from the emerging free states who increasingly challenged the religious, moral, political, and social legitimacy of slavery.

THE OUTLINES OF ANTEBELLUM PROSLAVERY THOUGHT

Between 1820 and the start of the Civil War in 1861, Southerners developed a variety of defenses of slavery that were rooted in traditional academic, professional, and political categories commonly understood by most educated Americans. This defense also responded, in kind, to attacks on slavery. Southerners turned to theology, history, political theory, law, science, and economics to defend the central institution of their society. They expressed their views in almost every conceivable form, including sermons and speeches delivered orally and then published; popular essays and learned articles on the Bible, history, and philosophy; economic analyses of labor, management, and production; books and articles in scientific and medical journals on all manner of subjects, from anthropology to zoology; contemporary descriptions of Haiti and other places where slavery had been abolished; legal treatises and judicial opinions; and novels, short stories, poems, and book reviews.

The common themes of this literature included arguments on black inferiority; that slavery is both universal and natural in all societies; and that Southern slavery is the most humane system of slavery ever devised because it protects and nurtures the slaves, who are inferior beings in need of care and supervision.

All of these arguments could not fit into a single, coherent defense of slavery. Some were mutually exclusive. For example, the largest single body of proslavery literature is based on religious defenses of slavery. Such defenses appealed to the overwhelmingly Protestant, often evangelical, Southern population. They were also aimed at the South's Protestant counterparts in the North and in Great Britain. But these religious defenses of slavery were often incompatible with the proslavery arguments based on science, medicine, and anthropology, which attracted some of the sharpest minds of the South.

One important debate illustrates this conflict between religion and science. Southern ministers and their allies argued that all humans were the descendants of Adam and Eve and existed as a result of a single creation, as described in the Bible. These ministers claimed that blacks were the descendants of Noah's son Ham and Noah's grandson Canaan. After the flood, according to the biblical story, Noah cursed Canaan, and proslavery

ministers claimed that the biblical “curse of Canaan” was that Canaan and all his descendants became black and were doomed forever to be “servants” of their brothers.⁴⁸

Many mid-nineteenth-century scientists argued that this biblical literalism was nonsense. They rejected the whole notion of monogenesis and asserted that blacks had in fact been separately created. Some of these scientists argued that blacks were in fact a separate species of beings, somewhere on the evolutionary scale between the great apes and humans. These scientists asserted that blacks had a different anatomy than whites and were even susceptible to different diseases. Many in the overwhelmingly Protestant and evangelical South rejected the scientific arguments and stuck to their biblical defense. However, this forced them into a debate over the Bible with Northern ministers, who had their own biblical arguments on the immorality of slavery. In the North, at least, and in much of the rest of the world, the antislavery biblical argument neutralized or defeated the proslavery biblical argument in the struggle for public opinion outside of the South. The antislavery forces focused on the Golden Rule—“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”—to make the persuasive point that slavery was antithetical to the spirit of Christianity. The result was that by fighting the intellectual debate over slavery with biblical arguments, the South was in fact fighting the antislavery forces on their strongest ground.

Ironically, opponents of slavery had few scientific arguments of their own, and thus in convincing outsiders, the scientific arguments may have been the strongest in the South’s intellectual arsenal.⁴⁹ But many of the most prominent Southerners refused to use these arguments because they were in conflict with Scripture.

Some proslavery theorists tried to please both the scientists and the clergy, asserting a single creation but searching the Bible for an explanation of the origin of the races. Some claimed that when God cursed Cain for killing Abel, he made Cain black. This theory, however, was relatively weak because it did not explain the existence of other races. Some Southerners argued that the different races emerged when God transformed the builders of the Tower of Babel. The most common explanation for the existence of blacks was the story of Noah and the curse of Canaan. Dr. Samuel Cartwright of New Orleans was perhaps the most creative of all. He argued that blacks and all other nonwhites were among the “other creatures” that God placed in the Garden of Eden before the creation of Adam. Cartwright claimed that the biblical story of Eve and the Tree of Knowledge had not involved a serpent but rather “the negro gardener” who handed Eve the apple.⁵⁰ Beyond the disputes between the scientists and the clergy, important proslavery thinkers differed substantially among themselves about other issues. Many proslavery theorists, like Thomas Jefferson and George Fitzhugh, had a strong animus against capitalism, industrial society, urbanization, and market economies. These Southern leaders extolled the virtues of an agrarian, noncapitalist society. On the other hand, the fiercely proslavery James D. B. De Bow, editor of *De Bow’s Commercial Review of the South and Western States*, was a forceful advocate of Southern

industrialization. Similarly, those who advocated that “Cotton Is King,” such as Senator James Henry Hammond, implicitly endorsed the importance and power of world markets.

The defense of slavery that allowed it to coexist with American democracy relied on numerous theories and factual assertions based on a wide variety of perspectives, philosophies, and principles. This defense also responded, in kind, to attacks on slavery. Southerners used religion, history, constitutional and legal arguments, census data, science, and economics to defend slavery. They wrote sermons, gave speeches, published essays, and prepared scientific articles that not merely defended slavery against its opponents, but also aggressively argued that the institution was a blessing, a benefit, a “positive good” for the masters, the slaves, the nonslaveholding whites, and indeed the entire society.

In addition, the South also turned to a cultural defense of slavery. Using short stories, novels, book reviews, and poems, Southerners offered a romantic fictionalized portrayal of slavery to counter growing Northern hostility. The literature was sometimes explicitly political. William J. Grayson’s “The Hireling and the Slave,” for example, was a fifty-page poem comparing the lot of the slave to that of the hired worker in a free market. The message was clear: A slave was protected from the cruelties of the market, while the free worker was not. Other literary works were romantic portrayals of happy slaves and kind masters. In the 1850s, Southern intellectuals and novelists combined harsh reviews with not particularly successful novels in a failed attempt to counter the most successful cultural assault on slavery, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s best-selling novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In his *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture*, Thomas F. Gossett lists twenty-seven proslavery works in response to Stowe’s novel between 1852 and the Civil War.⁵¹ Southerners produced a number of stories and novels modeled on Stowe’s masterpiece but written to provide a sympathetic view of slavery. Ultimately, whatever the form—a scientific paper, a sermon, a poem, or a speech—the most important defenses of slavery rested on history, religion, economics, political and constitutional arguments, social necessity, and science and medicine. Tied to all of these defenses, and woven throughout them, were arguments and discussions about race. Law, literature, theology, and all other disciplines and arts were applied to these defenses.

The Historical and Classical Defense

From the Revolution until the Civil War, many Americans looked to Greece and Rome—the first democracy and the first republic—as models for their own emerging democratic republic. Greek revival architecture and references to Roman society and culture were common in this period. Statues and paintings of George Washington and other national leaders often portrayed them in Roman togas. Thus it is not surprising that Southern defenders of slavery developed a historical defense based on the argument that slavery was a central institution in ancient Greece and Rome. Southerners in fact argued that all great societies—as well as

democracy, higher learning, and even civilization itself—relied on slavery. The proponents of this view noted that the great classical philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, assumed that slavery was an integral part of any great society. Southerners pointed to the accomplishments of the Greek democracy and the grandeur of the Roman republic to make the point that truly great cultures and societies not only accepted slavery, but depended on it. These Southerners noted that slavery allowed the leaders of a society to avoid manual labor and gave them time to devote to affairs of state. Thus classical support for slavery dovetailed with the notion, asserted by many Southerners, that slavery was a prerequisite to a ruling elite within a democratic society. As the historian David Brion Davis noted, “Living in a society that increasingly dissociated culture and public service from the slightest taint of manual labor,” Aristotle “saw slavery as a necessary means of supplying the wants of life.”⁵² Southern whites heartily agreed with such observations.

The logic of this argument was illustrated, in the minds of Southerners, by the contribution to national life made by the great planter-politicians like George Washington, George Mason, Thomas Jefferson, and General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. In the antebellum era, this sort of contribution continued with leaders like Andrew Jackson, James Polk, John C. Calhoun, and Henry Clay. Such men could devote their lives to public service because they had slaves to provide for their economic needs, just as the great slaveholding citizens of Greece and Rome could devote their lives to public service.

Southerners often turned to the ancient world to justify their modern institution. In looking at the ancient world, they found support from some of the most important thinkers in Western culture. Plato, for example, opposed the enslavement of fellow Greeks, and in *The Republic* he rejected the enslavement of citizens as punishment for crimes. Significantly, however, Plato and other Greek philosophers took for granted the enslavement of non-Greeks—barbarians—and in fact “had come to believe that the inferiority of barbarians could be seen in their willingness to submit to despotic and absolutist rulers.”⁵³ Barbarians were, in effect, a “slavish people” who were unfit for self-government but were naturally suited for bondage. This meant that in their own countries they would be perpetually ruled by tyrants, but also that if manumitted in Greece they could not possibly govern themselves either. Similarly, Aristotle “built his entire argument” for slavery “around Plato’s theory of natural inferiority.”⁵⁴ Indeed, he believed that Greeks should find a different “race” of people—that is non-Greeks—to serve as their slaves.⁵⁵

Southern defenders of democracy and slavery, like Thomas Jefferson, instinctively understood this concept. The Greek ideas of natural slavishness dovetailed perfectly with Southern notions of slavery. One need only substitute “black” or “African” for barbarian, and Southerners easily and quickly recognized that the great thinkers of ancient Greece were truly their allies. An important illustration of this comes from *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery*, written by Thomas R. R. Cobb, a cofounder of the first law school in Georgia. In this

treatise, Cobb quoted Plato, Euripides, Juvenal, and other classical writers to teach his readers that slavery, especially Negro slavery, was accepted by the greatest minds of Western culture. Tying race to history, Cobb insisted that at an “early day” the “negro was commonly used as a slave at Rome.” Implicitly comparing the South to the Roman Republic, he noted that “for her footmen and couriers” the Roman “wife preferred always the negroes” and that “Negroes, being generally slaves of luxury, commanded a very high price.” Similarly, Cobb asserted that in Ancient Israel “many” of the slaves “were Africans of negro extraction” and that “among the Egyptians . . . there were numbers of negro slaves.” Making similar claims for Assyria and Alexander the Great’s empire, he concluded, “The negro was a favorite among slaves” in the ancient world.⁵⁶ While there is no historical support for these ideas, Cobb’s assertions went unchallenged by most readers, who had little knowledge of or access to any serious works about ancient history. Most importantly, Cobb’s historical claims, however factually inaccurate, illustrate the way Southerners used (or misused) history to support the idea of slavery in general, and of racially based slavery in particular.

The Religious Defense

The holiness of ancient Israel was the starting place for the religious defense of slavery. Most of the biblical patriarchs, beginning with Abraham, were slaveowners. In testing Job, God allowed all of his slaves to be taken from him, and in rewarding Job for his piety, God made sure that Job had more slaves than before. Leviticus set out elaborate laws for governing slaves, but nowhere did the texts even implicitly condemn slavery. On the contrary, the law of the Old Testament assumed the existence of slavery and only attempted to regulate it. A minor example of this illustrates the point in a way that Southern slaveowners surely understood. Leviticus declared that “whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged, they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.”⁵⁷ The punishment for adultery—that is, sexual relations with another man’s wife—was execution of both parties. But sexual relations with another man’s slave woman, even if she were married, would not lead to any punishment for the man because the slave’s marriage was not recognized by the law in the same way that a free person’s marriage was. The slave woman would not be executed but only scourged. This passage also assumed, without comment or explanation, that male masters were free to have sex with their female slaves. If God ordained slavery in the Old Testament—and even explained how to deal with sex between slave women and free men—then how, Southerners asked, could there be any moral taint from owning slaves?

Proslavery theorists were equally at home turning to the New Testament for support. Paul’s “Letter to Philemon” explicitly endorsed the return of fugitive slaves. The Corinthian letters proclaimed that slaves should be satisfied with their lot: “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman; likewise he that was called, being free, is Christ’s servant.”⁵⁸ Southern ministers defended slavery with countless sermons

on these and other texts. They were certain that the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, supported their system of bondage.

While noting that the Bible supported slavery, they also urged masters to apply Christian principles to their treatment of slaves. Ministers argued for moderate punishment, sufficient food, decent housing, and even giving slaves leisure time, including an observance of the Sabbath. From the beginning of slavery in the Anglo-American world, one defense of bondage had been that it allowed for the conversion of pagans. This continued after the slave trade had ended. "The Duties of Christian Masters," published by the Baptist State Convention of Alabama, exhorted masters to care for the souls, as well as the bodies, of slaves. The author advised,

Short portions of Divine truth should be read and explained, and their particular application to them urged with kindness and faithfulness. Let the master exercise his judgment, that his servants may be benefitted by his wise arrangements for their spiritual well-being.⁵⁹

The religious arguments for slavery dovetailed with racist assumptions of whites. Southern ministers accepted the idea that only through enslavement could Christian morality be imposed on blacks. While supporting slavery, ministers also encouraged masters to respect slave marriages when at all possible and, of course, to avoid sexual exploitation of slaves. Their argument was a strong one: If Southern slavery was humane and generous and rooted in Christianity, then it could be easily justified to the entire world as an institution beneficial, not only to the master class, but also to the slaves themselves. Southern masters, in other words, could do well by doing good.

Finally, Southern religious leaders offered a biblical defense of black enslavement. As already noted, slaveowners turned to the story of Noah to explain the origins of blacks and to legitimize slavery. After the flood, Noah was "drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent." His son Ham "saw his father's nakedness, and told his two brothers outside." When Noah awoke, he cursed Ham's son, Canaan, declaring "Accursed be Canaan. He shall be his brothers' meanest slave." He then blessed his other sons, declaring "may Canaan be his slave."⁶⁰ Slaveowners argued that part of the "curse of Ham" was that he became black. Hence the Bible taught that slavery was legitimate and that race justified slavery. Southern ministers retold and explained this biblical story throughout the antebellum period.

The Economic Argument

Before the Civil War, numerous defenders of slavery stressed its importance to the American economy. In urging the admission of Kansas as a slave state, Senator James Henry Hammond of South Carolina argued that "the strength of a nation depends in a great measure upon its wealth," which was created by its exports. He estimated that about two-thirds of America's exports were either produced by slave labor, like raw cotton, or

were manufactured goods tied to slavery, like cotton cloth. In addition, he noted that much of the North's industrial production was based on the cotton, tobacco, and hemp that the South produced. Furthermore, he asserted that much of England's economy was tied to the Southern production of cotton. Equating attacks on slavery with attacks on the productions of slave labor, Hammond was emphatic: "No, sir, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares make war upon it. Cotton is king."⁶¹ Southerners also argued that slavery created a more stable economy than free labor. Free people could be put out of work in an economic downturn, as the poem "The Hireling and the Slave" makes clear. Similarly, they might strike for higher wages in flush times. But slaves were always employed and never went on strike. Thus some Southerners argued that slavery was actually a humane alternative to the harshness of the marketplace. The economics of slavery, they asserted, allowed for a paternalistic protection of slaves that capitalism did not provide for workers. If the factory owner went bankrupt, the workers would suffer; but if the master went bankrupt, the slaves would be sold to a new master, who would "care" for them.

Finally, slavery was of course extremely profitable. Profit, in the end, is a measure of the economic value of any system. Masters did not assert, too boldly, that their system was highly profitable. That would have been out of character with their culture and their self-proclaimed status as gentlemen. But it was profitable, highly profitable, and most Americans knew it. The best defense of slavery in the end may very well have been the lifestyle of the planter class. In a nation where "money talks," the profits of slavery were very loud.

The Legal Defense

The legal defense of slavery, like the American system of government, had a state component and a federal component. It also had a theoretical component. Legal theorists like Thomas R. R. Cobb offered arguments based on property, history, and the needs of a stable society, both to defend the existing slave system and to show what laws were necessary to preserve the system. Proslavery legal theorists like Cobb argued that blacks were inferior to whites, and thus there had to be special laws and special punishments for both free blacks and slaves. If blacks were inherently a criminal element, as proslavery theorists asserted, then the law had to be harsh and strict in keeping such people in their place.

State judges provided decisions, analysis, and precedents designed to protect slavery. Some of the case law was directed at protecting slave property within the South. For example, in *State v. Hale*,⁶² the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld the prosecution of a white man for beating a slave owned by someone else. The court noted that such offenses were

usually committed by men of dissolute habits, hanging loose upon society, who, being repelled from association with well disposed citizens, take refuge in the company of slaves, whom they

deprave by their example, embolden by their familiarity, and then beat, under the expectation that a slave dare not resent a blow from a white man.

Decisions like *State v. Hale* protected the property interest of the master in a slave but permitted the punishment of whites who harmed slaves. At the same time, in cases like *State v. Mann*,⁶³ the courts affirmed the right of masters to treat a slave however they wished, short of murder. The purpose of slavery, according to the legal systems of the Southern states, was to benefit the master. As North Carolina's Chief Justice Thomas Ruffin asserted: "The end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person and his posterity, to live without knowledge and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits." Because of this, "the power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect." The majesty of the law, and the power of the courts, secured to the master the power to coerce the slave. The legal system defended slavery, affirming that the courts could not "allow the right of the master to be brought into discussion in the courts of justice. The slave, to remain a slave, must be made sensible that there is no appeal from his master; that his power is in no instance usurped; but is conferred by the laws of man at least, if not by the law of God."⁶⁴

State courts and legislatures also provided for the punishment of whites or free blacks who challenged slavery. As early as the 1820s, the Southern states limited freedom of speech, press, assembly, and even movement for people who opposed slavery. The South increasingly became a closed society when it came to bondage. Debate over the justice or morality of slavery was simply not allowed, and the legal system provided a forum to punish those who violated the rules. At the federal level, the master class turned to the U.S. Constitution for the protection of slavery. Under the Constitution, masters could regain their fugitive slaves and rely on the national government to protect their property interest in their slaves. Neither slaves nor free blacks could hope for any legal protection from the U.S. Constitution. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*,⁶⁵ Chief Justice Roger B. Taney constitutionalized this theory while nationalizing Southern concepts of race. He found that under the Constitution blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."⁶⁶ Applying a rigorous, although not necessarily accurate, argument to determine the rights of blacks under the Constitution based on the intentions of the framers, Taney found "that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument."⁶⁷

Proslavery Science and Medicine

Scientists, physicians, and anthropologists offered their own defenses of slavery. Some of these defenses were implicit. Northern scholars, like Samuel G. Morton of Philadelphia, argued that blacks were a separate species from whites and biologically and intellectually inferior to whites. Morton did not talk about slavery but

limited his discussions to “science” as he understood it. Although he made no direct comments about slavery, he was of course fully aware that others would use his scientific “discoveries” to support the institution.

More directly concerned with slavery were two Southern physicians: Samuel Cartwright of New Orleans and Josiah C. Nott of Mobile, Alabama. Both were significant figures in the medical communities of the antebellum South. They contributed numerous articles to Southern medical journals on subjects that had nothing to do with slavery. Nott, an expert on yellow fever, posited the theory, which proved to be correct, that the disease was transmitted to humans through an intermediate host. Dr. Walter Reed would later use Nott’s theories to solve the mystery of the spread of both yellow fever and malaria.

Nott and Cartwright also wrote extensively on the connections between science, race, and slavery. Cartwright was well known as a “Negro” doctor who specialized in treating slaves. Masters throughout Louisiana as well as other parts of the deep South brought their slaves to him for care. Cartwright thus observed slaves, and blacks, and reached what he believed to be scientific discoveries about blacks.

He argued that blacks and whites had significant anatomical differences that made blacks suited for slavery. He wrote that a black had more nerve endings than other people but that “the brain being ten per cent less in volume and weight, he is, from necessity, more under the influence of his instincts and animality, than other races of men and less under the influence of his reflective faculties.”⁶⁸ This, Cartwright believed, made blacks more suited to slavery than members of other races. Cartwright also believed that blacks suffered from diseases that whites could not catch. He identified “Dysaesthesia Aethiopis” as an illness which caused slaves to misbehave, as if by compulsion. Another disease, “Drapetomania” affected the minds of slaves, “causing negroes to runaway.”

Cartwright’s scientific observations led him to defend slavery because in his mind, slavery protected the inferior race, which he believed could not survive in freedom. Josiah Nott was equally certain of the justice of slavery, but he rejected Cartwright’s acceptance of blacks as merely an inferior group within the human family. Nott concluded that blacks were actually a separate species from whites that God had created solely to be the slaves of whites.⁶⁹ For Nott, black inferiority was “a fixed law of nature,”⁷⁰ and thus slavery was not only logical, but moral. Nott and Cartwright are only the best known of numerous scientists who made consistent arguments in favor of slavery based on the view that blacks were particularly suited to bondage and that they could not survive as free people.

The Political Defense

The political defense of slavery proceeded from the assumption that any attack on slavery would lead to a civil war and that the American political and constitutional system was based implicitly on an understanding

that slavery was sacrosanct. In addition, proslavery theorists argued that slavery ultimately made democracy work. Such theorists as Senator James Henry Hammond and George Fitzhugh claimed that the greatest threat to democracy came from class warfare that destabilized the economy and threatened a peaceful and harmonious implementation of laws. But Southern theorists asserted that slavery eliminated this problem by elevating all free people to the status of "citizen" and by removing the lowest classes of society—what Hammond called "the mudsill"—from the political process.⁷¹ Those who would most threaten economic stability and political harmony—the lower classes—were not allowed to undermine democratic society because they were not allowed to participate in it. Thus the rights of life, liberty, and happiness proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence could be universally applied to white Americans precisely because they were not applied to blacks.

Proslavery theorists also questioned the legitimacy of politicians who attacked slavery. David Christy, writing on the eve of the Civil War, asserted that "the dropping of the negro question, in American politics would at once destroy the prospects of thousands of aspirants to office. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the clamor against slavery is made only for effect."⁷²

A subset of the political defense of slavery involved Southern responses to the Declaration of Independence itself. Some Southerners categorically rejected the entire ideology of the Declaration. In 1826, the Virginia politician John Randolph of Roanoke asserted that the Declaration was "a most pernicious falsehood."⁷³ Edmund Ruffin, one of the South's earliest secessionists, thought the Declaration was a dangerous document. John C. Calhoun labeled the idea of equality a "false doctrine," only "hypothetically true," that had been "inserted" in the Declaration of Independence "without any necessity."⁷⁴ James Henry Hammond of South Carolina sneered at the "fine sounding and sentimental" language of the Declaration.⁷⁵

In 1854, George Fitzhugh provided an elaborate proslavery attack on the Declaration. Fitzhugh believed that the United States was founded on "abstractions" that were "professed falsely."⁷⁶ He candidly asserted that "men are not born physically, morally or intellectually equal" and, contrary to the ideology of the Declaration, "their natural inequalities beget inequalities of rights." All blacks, he believed, were born "weak in mind or body,"⁷⁷ and because of this, "nature has made them slaves; all that law and government can do, is to regulate, modify and mitigate their slavery." He argued that on historical grounds "life and liberty" are not "inalienable"; they have been sold in all countries, and in all ages, and must be sold so long as human nature lasts." Slavery, in Fitzhugh's mind, was not peculiar but fundamental to society. He believed the North, not the South, had a peculiar institution: freedom. He argued that the purpose of government was "to restrict, control and punish man in the pursuit of happiness." Thus the preamble to the Declaration was "verbose, newborn, false, and unmeaning." The Declaration was "exuberantly false" and "fallacious."⁷⁸ Fitzhugh and other proslavery

theorists argued that all men were not created equal, but that inequality was natural and universal. Rejecting the Declaration and its theories of equality, many Southerners instead developed their own proslavery arguments, ultimately asserting that slavery was a positive good for the slave and the master.⁷⁹

Other Southerners continued to endorse the Declaration but denied that it could affect slavery. Some Southerners took a high road by arguing that the Declaration—like its Virginia counterpart—only applied to citizens or political communities. Slaves were naturally excluded from these.⁸⁰ One Virginia congressman argued that “no ingenuity” could “torture the Declaration of Independence into having the remotest allusion to the institution of domestic slavery.”⁸¹ Alexander Stephens, the future vice president of the Confederate States of America, believed that the framers had established “the first great principles of self-government by the governing race.”⁸²

The key for Stephens and other Southern supporters of the Declaration was of course race. Race made it possible for slaveowners to accept the credo of America because they could reject its application to their own slaves. Thus one Louisiana slaveowner affirmed that all men were created “free and equal as the Declaration of Independence holds they are.”⁸³ He then added, “But all men, niggers, and monkeys aint.”⁸⁴

While Calhoun, Fitzhugh, and other white Southerners rejected the Declaration because it undermined slavery, other masters “frequently made the Fourth of July a holiday for their slaves.”⁸⁵ Slaves at a barbecue to celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence may seem ironic, but for such masters it was not. Masters considered slavery a benefit to the slaves, who were, in their eyes, racially inferior. Thus masters celebrated independence with their slaves because it was independence from Britain that allowed the American slaveowners to develop the political and legal system that perpetuated and strengthened slavery—a slavery that they claimed was a positive good for slaves as well as masters.

RACIAL THEORY AND IDEOLOGY: THE KEY TO PROSLAVERY THOUGHT

In the end, the key to the proslavery argument was race. It was the basis for all other defenses of slavery. Indeed, the racial argument was the “mudsill” of proslavery theory, just as Senator Hammond proclaimed that slavery was the mudsill of Southern society. Ultimately, all of the Southern defenses of slavery came back to race. This was necessary for two reasons. First, in the end only race could counter the obvious point that slavery contradicted the egalitarian and free-labor basis of American society. Second, if race was not the ultimate basis of slavery, then all of the arguments in favor of slavery might also be applied to poor whites or to immigrant

whites. Other societies that accepted class distinctions as inevitable allowed for the enslavement of their own people, even though “outsiders” were most often enslaved. But in the United States, formal, recognized class distinctions among whites were unacceptable. Outsiders or immigrants, moreover, were constantly being brought into the society as full citizens. Thus only race could justify slavery.

The racial defense of slavery was based on two interrelated arguments: First, blacks were inferior to whites and were indeed better off as slaves. Second, if freed, people of African ancestry could not survive in the United States or live in peace with whites. The racial argument was tied to all other arguments defending slavery because for Americans, “race has always been the central reality of slavery.”⁸⁶

Because slavery in the United States “was black slavery,” the study of slavery remains current and vital, and “even a purely historical study of an institution now dead for more than a century cannot escape being caught up in the urgency of contemporary black-white tensions.”⁸⁷ Ultimately, Southerners turned to history, religion, and science to defend the concept of race as a justification for slavery. Using science or the Bible or both, Southerners strove mightily to demonstrate why blacks were “inferior” to whites.

Although slavery ended in 1865, many of the arguments about racial inferiority used to defend slavery remained part of America’s intellectual culture and social mores. These proslavery arguments were recast and used to defend segregation, inequality, and the exploitation of blacks well into the twentieth century. To this day, remnants of proslavery thought can be found in our public discourse as well as private conversation. To understand how slavery shaped American history and continues to affect American society, we must examine the nature of proslavery thought.

The Defense of Slavery in the Northern Press on the Eve of the Civil War

BY HOWARD C. PERKINS

The American people, on January 4, 1861, observed a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. By proclamation President James Buchanan had called upon the nation to offer thanks for its abundant blessings and to pray that "God will be to us as He has been to our fathers." The spirit and talent of man seeming to fail, perhaps the favor of Heaven could avert the civil war which the struggle over slavery threatened to bring upon the land.

On that same day, in the columns of his *Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison, the irrepressible preacher of the "irrepressible conflict," exultantly proclaimed the completion of thirty years' service "under Divine guidance." Now, with secession triumphant in South Carolina and imminent throughout the Lower South, he acclaimed disunion as the victory of abolitionism: "At last, 'the covenant with death' is annulled, and 'the agreement with hell' broken." Somewhat later, Abolitionist James Redpath, penning a salutatory for his *Pine and Palm*, announced a program which advocated "action, rather than the promulgation of ideas." Seeking "to array against Slavery, and the prejudices it has engendered, not the moral powers exclusively, but the physical forces of the age," he invited "John Brown expeditions" and "simultaneous and extended Negro insurrections."¹

As Garrison and Redpath thus assailed the institution of slavery, John H. Van Evrie and James Gordon Bennett defended it. Writing in their respective newspapers, the New York *Day-Book* and the New

¹ Boston and New York *Pine and Palm*, May 18, 1861.

York *Herald*, they spoke as directly and vigorously as did the editors of the *Liberator* and the *Pine and Palm*. Moreover, like Garrison and Redpath, they were but the noisiest and most colorful of a group of like-minded editors. Thus, as there were abolitionist editors, there were pro-slavery editors; and the defense of slavery, like abolitionism, held a place in the northern mind.

Between these two extremes lay the great middle ground, occupied by the overwhelming majority of the three thousand-odd editors of the northern free states. Devoted to constitutional forms and processes and to national well-being, they were unwilling to sustain a program in which slavery dominated every other consideration. Most of them disliked slavery, and yet to them it was not wholly bad and emancipation not wholly good. They saw difficulties and embarrassments in the wake of change. They demurred at the destruction of southern economy. They shrank from Negro suffrage, the social equality of the races, and the amalgamation of white men and black. They warned of a northern invasion by half-civilized freedmen and the displacement of white laborers by cheap Negro workers. They feared overflowing almshouses, and they deplored the threat to northern health and morality.

Extenuations of slavery, as these sentiments involved, appeared frequently in Democratic newspapers² and occasionally in Republi-

² See, for instance, the following: Maine: *Augusta Weekly Age*, January 3, 1861; New Hampshire: *Concord New Hampshire Patriot*, October 24, 1860; Massachusetts: *Boston Post*, November 29, 1860; Connecticut: *New Haven Daily Register*, November 21, 1860; Rhode Island: *Providence Post*, November 8, 1860, February 2, 1861; New York: *Albany Atlas and Argus*, January 12, 1861, *Brooklyn City News*, October 5, 1860, *Buffalo Courier*, May 15, 1861, *Syracuse Central City Courier*, October 31, 1860, *Syracuse Courier and Union*, January 24, March 1, 1861, *Utica Observer*, December 10, 1860; Pennsylvania: *Allentown Democrat*, October 31, 1860, *Erie Observer*, October 27, 1860, *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, December 14, 1860, *Norristown Register*, October 23, 1860, *Philadelphia Evening Argus*, April 9, 1861, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 28, March 6, 11, 1861, *Pittsburgh Post*, December 17, 1860, January 29, 1861, *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, February 2, 1861, *Wilkes-Barre Luzerne Union*, April 17, 1861; District of Columbia: *Washington States and Union*, March 21, 1861; Ohio: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 31, December 30, 1860, *Cleveland National Democrat*, November 19, 1860, *Columbus Capital City Fact*, October 23, 1860, *Columbus Crisis*, February 7, 1861, *Columbus Ohio Statesman*, October 21, November 2, 1860; Michigan: *Detroit Free Press*, October 31, December 15, 1860, January 15, 1861; Indiana: *Indianapolis Sentinel*, November 12, 1860, February 2, 1861, *Salem Democrat*, February 7, 1861, *Vincennes Weekly Sun*, February 1, 1861; Illinois: *Joliet Signal*, March 26, 1861, *Quincy Herald*, October 20, 1860, *Springfield State Register*, September 4, 17, 28, 1860; Iowa: *Dubuque Herald*, June 28, 1861;

can.³ They must have served to modify the antislavery zeal of the North as a whole and to afford slavery the aid of restraining the offensive against it. Although they were definitely not proslavery commitments, they were certainly anti-abolitionist. Together with the constitutionalism of the northern people, they gave American Negro slavery a defense which, secession aside, might have been adequate to its preservation. This "defense" of slavery measured incomparably greater than that furnished by all those journals of the North that by approving the institution itself justified the characterization of "proslavery." It was these proslavery newspapers, however, those of Van Evrie, Bennett, and their kind, that provided what is here described as "the defense of slavery."

First among the newspapers of the North in vigor and persistence of proslavery argument ranked the New York *Day-Book*. Although repeatedly boasting a larger circulation in the South than all other northern papers combined, the *Day-Book* resented as a "gross and wicked slander" the charge that it was "a Southern newspaper."⁴ Not content with southern "honors," it offered to wager a hundred dollars that it could prove a "larger circulation in the North than any other Democratic newspaper published in the North."⁵ Begun in 1848, the *Day-Book* was for a short time antislavery, but under N. R. Stimson it turned proslavery. Its editor in 1860-1861 and for several years before was John H. Van Evrie, a physician of western New York and Ohio backgrounds. He supported John C. Breckinridge in the election of 1860, and in the crisis that followed approved the policy of President Buchanan.⁶ He opposed southern concessions to the North,⁷ explicitly rejecting the Crittenden Compromise.⁸ He urged loyalty to the Dred

Wisconsin: *Madison Patriot*, November 14, 1860, *Milwaukee News*, October 21, 1860, *Milwaukee People's Press*, November 7, 1860, *Milwaukee Press and News*, January 17, 1861; Minnesota: *Henderson Democrat*, December 1, 1860. See also the following independent papers: *Providence Press*, October 25, 1860; *Lancaster Daily Express*, January 17, 1861; *Cincinnati Press*, October 23, December 15, 1860.

³ Newburyport *Herald*, February 5, 6, March 25, April 1, 1861; *New York Times*, January 22, 1861; *Troy Times*, March 2, 1861; *Philadelphia News*, November 22, 1860.

⁴ *New York Day-Book*, January 2, 1861.

⁵ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1861.

⁶ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1861.

⁷ *Ibid.*, January 21, 1861.

⁸ *Ibid.*, January 31, 1861.

Scott decision⁹ and insisted upon the moral obligation as well as the constitutional right of Southerners to carry "slavery" into the territories.¹⁰

Van Evrie's views on slavery itself, urged with a passion that subordinated all partisan considerations, rested upon his theory of the independent origins of the two races concerned. He contended that the Negro was a human being but wholly different from white men. Although the black man could never aspire to social or political equality with the white man, he had a certain usefulness to society when subjected to competent guardianship. Negro servitude and white protection and guidance, in fact, complemented each other in the "Divine Plan." Moreover, the position of the Negro in servitude was so fitting and natural that "slavery" was the grossest misnomer, for that word implied unnatural relationships. Both fitting and natural, Negro "slavery" was "the most desirable thing in human affairs," opposition to it "impiety to God," and the preaching of "freedom" treasonable and inhumane. The true friends of the Negro sought for him his intended status and would not inflict untold suffering upon him through forcing him into a hopeless competition with the superior white man. Thrusting the Negro into that rivalry would be an attempt to make him a "black white man" and must of necessity fail. American democracy would be the price of the experiment, for democracy meant freedom and freedom was naturalness. The doctrine of equality prattled about by abolitionists originated with Lord Mansfield in the Somerset case, whereas the true doctrine had been laid down by an American chief justice in the Dred Scott case. With Mansfield and Taney, representing British and American principles, in conflict, no American should hesitate to choose between them. The British really knew nothing of liberty: Blackstone's learned declarations merely supported aristocracy, while true liberty embraced the liberty of all men endowed with the capacity for exercising it—that is, all white men. Furthermore, the rejection of servitude entailed racial amalgamation, for the races could not exist as equals. Better than the victory of antislavery, therefore, was the extinction of

⁹ *Ibid.*, January 23, 31, April 6, 1861.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, January 31, 1861.

one race, the white race if need be. But abolitionism would die when the people understood the issues; then, in obedience to Nature's command, the Negroes of the tropics, secure in servitude, would fulfill their mission and gain their greatest happiness. The majority of Northerners firmly believed in "preserving this forever a Republic of white men"; and when they discovered themselves duped by Lincoln, Seward, Chase, and others, those men stood to be "knocked in the head as remorselessly as so many mad dogs by the betrayed, outraged and indignant freemen of the North."¹¹

Despite his vigorous opposition to coercion, Van Evrie, late in April, 1861, insisted that he had never advocated secession.¹² At the same time he contended that the states, with first claim on the allegiance of their citizens, had the right to do whatever they believed best for their own interests. He labored for peace even after Sumter, declaring on May 14 that reconstruction must eventually come on the basis of the fundamental tenet of the Montgomery constitution—Negro servitude—"because it is vital to the South, to the North, to the future civilization of America—to the freedom, progress and prosperity of every white man on the American continent." Becoming a full-fledged Copperhead paper and denied the further use of the mails in August, 1861, the daily edition of the *Day-Book* soon died. The weekly edition disguised itself under another name—*The Caucasian*—and continued the struggle. The talents of Van Evrie were equal to the task and at the end of the second volume of the *Caucasian* the original name was resumed. This paper died in 1879 with the indomitable Van Evrie still in the chair.

The influence of the *Day-Book* remains uncertain. Its figures on circulation were probably exaggerated, as became the figures of every honest editor, but they may have reached fifty or sixty thousand. Although the *Day-Book* was not widely quoted, it was sent and known throughout the country. Van Evrie himself was doubtless more publicized as the author of a book which, through several editions,¹³ presented a rous-

¹¹ These views of the *Day-Book* were contained in editorials of the following dates: January 2, 7, 16, 23, 24, 31, April 8, 23, May 14, 1861.

¹² *Ibid.*, April 23, 1861.

¹³ Van Evrie's book, *Negroes and Negro "Slavery"* (New York), was an enlargement of a pamphlet of the same title issued in several editions in 1853 and 1854. Two editions

ing championship of slavery. His theories of racial pluralism received the commendation of prominent men in both sections. It appears likely, however, that his extremism was generally understood and his influence therefore reduced. Moreover, although a man of considerable reading and intelligence, his "science" was at times a bit incredible, as, for instance, his assertion that because the hair on a Negro's head was triangular to strike him on the head with the bare hand would be to incur cuts to the bone.

Less devoted to the theme of slavery than the *Day-Book*, the New York *Herald*, colorful journal of James Gordon Bennett, exerted greater influence through its enormous circulation and the bizarre genius of its editor. Bennett, a native of Scotland and a Catholic, was born in 1795. He spent most of his time between 1819 and 1823 in the southern states, accepting there the principles of the conservative Democracy. Beginning the *Herald* in 1835, he set himself upon the road that led to financial prosperity and social ostracism. Even before 1860 he had arrived.

Throughout the presidential campaign and the winter that followed, the *Herald* spoke again and again in defense of slavery. In August it predicted sanguinary consequences for emancipation, notably the interruption of "our historic development" by a "war of races."¹⁴ In early October it warned of the destruction of the existing material and social interests of the South, the spoliation of northern rural districts by marauding blacks, and the enactment of "inhuman anti-negro legislation."¹⁵ Later in October it defended slavery as an institution for the social control of an inferior race:

The South hold, and hold rightly, that the institution of domestic servitude for the African race among them is neither an evil nor a crime. The great problem is, how shall four millions of an inferior race of men remain in society, best

of the book appeared in 1861, a third in 1863, and two more, under the title, *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination*, in 1868 and 1870. Van Evrie wrote many pamphlets and contributed numerous articles to the *Old Guard* (New York, 1863-1870), a Democratic monthly. The volume of his output and his inexhaustible devotion to the cause throughout a long life filled with personal tragedy entitle him to be regarded as the foremost northern defender of slavery. The present writer has in preparation a biography of Van Evrie.

¹⁴ New York *Herald*, August 19, 1860.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, October 1, 1860.

for their happiness, for the good of the community of which they form a part, and for the interests of civilization at large? What shall be their social and political status? It is admitted everywhere, either theoretically or practically, that they are not equal in social capacity to the white race, and they are denied social equality, except by a few enthusiasts and impractical theorists. Wherever these have ruled, and the African has been admitted to social equality with the white man, society has been lowered in its standard, and the moral and religious impulses of our nature have been outraged and degraded. Experience has widely demonstrated that in political capacity they are far inferior to the white race, and wherever they have obtained political rule their government has been nothing but a ridiculous parody on that of the white man. Hence the South has accepted the solution of the great problem of government for this inferior race, in the preservation of the institution of domestic servitude for the millions of Africans who are in their midst, who cannot be destroyed nor yet displaced without destroying the whole fabric of Southern society, with all its vast interests and possessions, and constructing it anew.¹⁶

On New Year's day, 1861, the *Herald* charged the "gigantic proportions" of the crisis to "the fact that the social institution of slavery has been made a moral and religious question, and in that shape has entered deeply into the politics of the country." It declared that such a view of slavery gravely imperiled the Union:

As a political issue merely, or dealing with it as a social institution, the agitation of the slavery question could work but little harm to the prosperity or permanency of the Union; but when the institution of African slavery becomes—as it has become within the last quarter of a century—to be regarded as a great moral wrong—an iniquity crying to Heaven for vengeance—the question assumes at once the form and features of a religious agitation alike in its mode of action and its results, exemplifying the same arrogant dictation and animating the same persecuting spirit as the religious warfare that desolated Europe for three centuries.

The theme of William J. Grayson's "The Hireling and the Slave"—the advantage held by the slaves of the South over the factory workers of the North in economic and social security—appeared in an editorial of January 25. After commenting on a recent prayer session of the Evangelical Anti-Slavery Society, the *Herald*, in proffering some worldly counsels to the praying abolitionists, said:

If, instead of praying over what does not need their prayer, the condition of the happy negroes in servitude under Christian masters, who provide them with

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, October 18, 1860.

Bennett—"An Architect of Ruin"—as "a social and intellectual pariah, whom society has cast from its bosom with loathing; a creature from whom honest men instinctively recoil."²¹

With the coming of the tense days of April the *Herald* abandoned its pro-southern course and accepted the leadership of the Lincoln administration. On April 15 it came half-heartedly to the support of the war, and on the next day rather more than half-heartedly.

In striking contrast to the sensational *Herald*, the old and conservative New York *Journal of Commerce* added a certain respectability to the defense of slavery in the northern press. The *Journal* had been founded in 1827 as a "moral" organ by Arthur Tappan. About a year later Gerard Hallock and Nathan Hale assumed control and eventually purchased the paper. On the death of Hale in 1849 Hallock became sole proprietor and remained in charge until pressure from the Lincoln administration forced his retirement in August, 1861.²² The *Journal* had early won prominence in European news and had later gained recognition as the leading financial authority in the country. By 1850, however, its political and social conservatism had reduced its circulation, for it could not compete successfully for public support against the more lively sheets—the *Sun*, the *Herald*, and the *Tribune*. It supported the Fusion ticket in 1860.

Although regarded in the northern press as proslavery, the *Journal* was less insistent than the *Day-Book* and the *Herald* on arguing the merits of slavery. It expressed much concern over constitutional issues, denying the legality of interference with slavery, rejecting the right of secession, and explicitly preferring peaceable separation to war.²³ While on occasion it spoke of "the different systems of labor demanded by our dissimilarity of climate and production"²⁴ and of "the concurring circumstances of climate and production" without which the northern states "would not even now be rid" of slavery,²⁵ and while it condemned abolitionism as a menace to the complete happiness of master and

²¹ *Utica Morning Herald*, December 14, 1860.

²² William H. Hallock, *Life of Gerard Hallock* (New York, 1869), 20.

²³ *New York Journal of Commerce*, January 23, 1861, for instance.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, November 8, 1860.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1860.

slave,²⁶ it rarely gave extended attention to race relations. On October 26, 1860, however, in an editorial entitled "The Negro Race" it presented proslavery views which resembled those of the more voluble *Day-Book*.

A superior and an inferior race, the *Journal* declared, could not occupy the same territory on terms of equality. Either slavery or the weaker race would die, for an attempt to fuse the races would result in the physical and mental deterioration of the weaker, followed by its extinction. An "unprepared" freedom of the slaves would entail their extermination, "accompanied by a train of events most horrible to contemplate." Moreover, although American slavery endeavored to civilize the Negroes, their advancement really challenged the resources of evolution: "To raise up the great African race from serfdom to a condition of advancement and civilization, or to place them in a position where every favor and liberty and right, social and political, shall be allowed them, just as it is allowed to the whites, is a possibility of which we may dream for coming ages."

In his native habitat in Africa, continued the *Journal* in the same editorial, the Negro persisted "an habitual drunkard, a thief, a liar, revengeful, licentious, groveling in his habits, almost destitute of natural affection, unprogressive in character," and a fetishist. In addition, he was subject to "almost universal" slavery and to kidnapping. Compared to such a condition, slavery in the southern states became "benevolence itself." "Everybody" knew that the Negro improved under "the refining influences of civilized life"; consequently, "scarcely a fraction of the people of the United States" were in favor of "now freeing the slaves." Opposition on the part of Northerners to the race relations policy of the South therefore only impeded the "advancement of genuine humanity."

In addition to the *Day-Book*, the *Herald*, and the *Journal of Commerce*, three other important non-religious newspapers of the New York metropolitan area defended slavery: the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Morning Express*, and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.²⁷ The

²⁶ *Ibid.*, December 15, 1860.

²⁷ For a discussion of the peculiar relations between New York City and the South, see Philip S. Foner, *Business and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1941).

News, boasting with one exception the largest circulation in the city,²⁸ was published by W. Drake Parsons. It had been founded in 1855 as an organ of the Tammany Democracy. Coming under the editorship of Benjamin Wood, it served the municipal administration of Mayor Fernando Wood, an older brother of Benjamin. Apparently in response to its discontinuance on May 16, 1861, as the official paper of the city because of its "disunion tone,"²⁹ Benjamin Wood in a signed statement accepted full responsibility for its editorials.³⁰ The *Express*, founded in 1836 by James and Erastus Brooks, had made its way from Whiggery through Know-Nothingism to Democracy. It was edited in 1860-1861 by Erastus Brooks. The *Eagle*, founded and owned by Isaac Van Anden and edited by Henry McCloskey, claimed the largest evening circulation in the United States.³¹

The *News* and the *Eagle* entered the presidential campaign of 1860 as supporters of Breckinridge, while the *Express* preferred Douglas. As Republican prospects grew brighter, the opposition combined to frame a "Fusion" ticket in an effort to maneuver Lincoln out of a majority in the electoral college and thus toss the election into the lap of the House of Representatives. It was hoped that there a compromise Democratic-Unionist candidate might be chosen. The *News*, the *Eagle*, and the *Express* backed the Fusion ticket, as did the *Herald* and the *Journal of Commerce*, but the *Day-Book*, scorning compromise, remained loyal to Breckinridge.

The *News* opposed Negro suffrage—the extension of which was an issue in the New York elections of 1860—, supported the right of slaveholders to carry their slaves into the territories, and in many editorials strongly urged the suppression of the African slave trade. It rejected the argument that the Declaration of Independence included Negroes in the proposition that "all men were created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights"³² and declared that "the negro race under the Southern system of labor is happier than

²⁸ New York *Daily News*, November 10, 1860, for instance.

²⁹ New York *Herald*, May 17, 1861.

³⁰ New York *Daily News*, May 18, 1861.

³¹ Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*, September 4, 1860, and succeeding issues.

³² New York *Daily News*, November 10, 1860.

it could be in any other relation."³³ Like most proslavery journals, it asserted the civilizing and Christianizing function of slavery. Accepting the argument that "the increase of the race and the longevity of individuals attest that slavery is the best possible condition of the negro," it characterized slavery as "true philanthropy." The inferior Negro, guided and cared for, became useful, but if exposed to the competition of white men would suffer extermination. "Emancipation is death—slavery is life."³⁴ The Liberia colonization venture was a horrible mistake and the whole colony but a "loathsome, sickening pest house."³⁵ The Negroes prospered far more under beneficent American slavery than when subject to the famines and pestilences of Liberia.

The *Express* claimed divine support for slavery, asserted its Christianizing mission, and contrasted the slave with the free Negro of the North, much to the credit of slavery.³⁶ "Christian slavery" brought "the redemption of the African from Heathenism, Idolatry and Savagery," and, in doing so, became his "blessing, not his curse." Perhaps God intended to use African Negroes, Christianized under American slavery, "for the Christianization of Africa itself." Slavery was the "very best condition of life, both for white master and negro slave." The *Brooklyn Eagle*, describing abolitionism as "bogus philanthropy," declared that the South existed upon slavery, which, under certain conditions of soil and climate, was indispensable.³⁷

Two religious newspapers of New York City also defended slavery: the *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register* and the *Observer*. Founded in 1840, the *Freeman's Journal* came in 1848 under the control of James A. McMaster. Except for eight months as Lincoln's guest at Fort Lafayette,³⁸ McMaster remained as editor until his death in 1886. As the

³³ *Ibid.*, December 22, 1860.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1861.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 8, 1861.

³⁶ These views of the *New York Morning Express* were presented in an editorial of January 8, 1861.

³⁷ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 30, 1860. A pamphlet issued on October 26, 1901, entitled *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle: Sixtieth Anniversary*, asserts that Van Anden was not in sympathy with the southern Democracy views of McCloskey and that in August, 1861, McCloskey was removed to avoid prosecution of the *Eagle* for treasonable utterances.

³⁸ Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York, 1941), 355; Apollinaris W. Baumgartner, *Catholic Journalism in the United States* (New York, 1931), 21-22.

story goes, when a young man he had inclined toward the priesthood, but his confessor had commanded him "to enter the world and become a Catholic journalist." He complied and succeeded so well that for nearly forty years this son of an eminent Presbyterian minister was regarded as "the chief Roman Catholic journalist in this country."³⁹ His especial service to slavery was his attempt to reconcile it with Roman Catholicism, and in this he felt himself well qualified, declaring that "the canons and the laws of the Church . . . have been a special study with us, and are the law of our conscience." He insisted that "the Catholic Church has never told a master to manumit a slave," adding that "if we were so unfortunate as to own a plantation with five hundred negro slaves on it . . . we *dare* not, we *could* not, without violating our Catholic conscience, give them a liberty which we know they are not fit to use without harming themselves and others."⁴⁰

McMaster discussed the problem of slavery in more detail on February 2, 1861. In an editorial called "The Catholic Solution" he presented his interpretation of the position of the Church:

Two weeks ago we showed, on the authority of a Council recognized by Popes, that, in the fourth century, the injunction of the Apostles, in regard to the duty of slaves to their masters, was developed and enforced by the Catholic Church. Thus it is *recognized* by the Catholic Church, that human bondage—the debt of life-long service by man to man—irrespective of any difference of race—*may be* a legitimate *human relation*. . . . Slavery existed in Europe down to the seventeenth century, and was extinguished by civil, not by ecclesiastical, law. Slavery existed in America from the very early colonial times, and exists still—faithful and obedient Catholics being slave-holders all the while.

Human slavery—the bondage of man to man—is a human relation. It arises out of a great debt contracted, or out of the protracted incompetency of the bondman to provide for himself, without the guardianship of his master. In special cases—outside of abuses—it may have its hardships. What human relationship has not? . . . But, not therefore is the Catholic Church, or Catholic teaching, responsible for the *abuses* of slavery, any more than for the abuses of other relationships. . . .

Thus the Catholic Church distinguishes. She recognizes slavery as lawful, and as sometimes necessary, but she never recognizes its abuses.

³⁹ James G. Wilson and John Fiske (eds.), *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 7 vols. (New York, 1887-1889), IV, 148; Charles G. Herbermann, et al. (eds.), *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (New York, 1913-1914), IX, 506.

⁴⁰ New York *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register*, January 19, 1861.

The New York *Observer* has escaped oblivion by a slender margin. No recent history of journalism includes it and no files appear to have survived.⁴¹ Professor Emerson D. Fite, in his *Presidential Campaign of 1860*, declares that it was proslavery and proceeds to denounce it roundly. Although regarding it as one of "the important religious papers," he found in it "nothing of the great moral ferment and revolution, nothing on human rights and liberty." He concludes that it represented the Christian world of "far-distant missionary lands," and that it was "dead so far as the morals of America were concerned." Professor Fite does not make it clear that he ever saw a copy of the *Observer*. Perhaps a search, diligent and vain, enabled him to write with conviction that "not even an outline description of American religious life could be culled from its pages."⁴²

Like the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Observer* was a weekly. It had been founded in 1823 by Sidney E. Morse and Richard C. Morse, brothers of the better known Samuel F. B. Morse, himself a defender of slavery. In 1860-1861 the chief management was in the hands of a son of Sidney E. Morse.⁴³ The *Observer* was still alive in 1876, being published at that time by S. I. Prime and Company.⁴⁴

In contrast to New York City's numerous and powerful proslavery newspapers, Philadelphia contained only the dying *Morning Pennsylvanian*.⁴⁵ Founded in 1832 and once managed by James Gordon Bennett, the *Pennsylvanian* was edited from 1845 to 1853 by John W. Forney, later of the *Philadelphia Press*, and in 1860-1861 by John H. Brimmer. After supporting Breckinridge in the campaign of 1860 and in the crisis that followed, it proved itself one of the most ardent Buchanan organs among the larger city journals of the North. Perhaps the most

⁴¹ At least there are no files mentioned in Winifred Gregory (comp.), *Union List of Newspapers* (New York, 1937).

⁴² See Emerson D. Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860* (New York, 1911), 88-89.

⁴³ The ownership of the New York *Observer* is discussed in Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872* (New York, 1873), 296.

⁴⁴ George P. Rowell & Co., *American Newspaper Directory* (New York, 1876), 703.

⁴⁵ The Philadelphia *Evening Argus* may have shared the sentiments of the *Pennsylvanian* and the Washington *Constitution*, as all three were in the pay of the Buchanan administration. *House Reports*, 36 Congress, 1 Session, Nos. 394 and 648, cited in Fite, *Presidential Campaign*, 134-35. No *Argus* files of this period appear to have survived. It died late in 1861.

bitterly anti-Lincoln newspaper published in the free states, it once declared that if the people elected Lincoln to the Presidency "they will do as absurd a thing as the tyrant Caligua [*sic*] did when he proclaimed his horse Consul."⁴⁶

Brimner spurned the Republican suggestion that the Declaration of Independence should be accepted as "a declaration of the freedom of the negro in this country, and of his equality with the white man." That "great discovery," he said, "was left for modern Atheists and Yankee Pharisees."⁴⁷ Characterizing abolitionism as "an assault upon the sacred *right of individual property*," he first set up the lawful character of property in man: "Slaves," he said, "*are property*. The law *makes property*. There is no property except *what* the law makes property. And whatever the law makes property is good property." Brimner then described the consequences of an assault upon property in slaves:

. . . whoever assails ruthlessly the sanctity of one species of property, assails, in principle, all. . . .

The sanctity of the *right* of individual property is the basis of all society. Without it, no human organization can be preserved. . . .

. . . The spirit which animates those who would liberate the slaves of your neighbors today, may be turned against your *banks* tomorrow, and may be led on to sack your magazines, as it has been "to gut a rum shop," or rifle a flour store. . . .⁴⁸

The *Pennsylvanian* denounced Republicanism and abolitionism, sometimes the one, sometimes the other, sometimes the two as identical, in virtually every issue of the winter of 1860-1861. It declared that slavery alone afforded security to the South, providing Southerners "the foundation of their system, of their wealth, and of their prosperity."⁴⁹ The agitation of the Negro question, insisted the *Pennsylvanian*, affected "most seriously and injuriously the happiness of the race," for the Negro's "true home is in the sunny south, his happiest condition is that of Southern servitude, where his labor is turned to the best account, where

⁴⁶ Philadelphia *Morning Pennsylvanian*, September 7, 1860.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, September 24, 1860.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1860.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, February 16, 1861.

his health is cared for, and where he is always assured of a plenty to eat and comfortable clothes to wear."⁵⁰

Although at times thus explicitly proslavery, the *Pennsylvanian*, like most of the northern proslavery journals, expended more energy in fighting emancipation in the United States than in justifying the institution of slavery. It rehearsed the familiar arguments of the ruinous economic competition of free blacks,⁵¹ the threat of social equality and intermarriage,⁵² and the horrors of a war of races.⁵³ Physical contact with Negroes bothered Brimner a great deal. He protested against conductors' permitting colored people to ride in street cars with white people, and he asked the car companies to give "peremptory instruction on this point."⁵⁴ In particular, he objected to being "jostled" on the sidewalks of Philadelphia by "strong smelling bucks and steaming negro wenches."⁵⁵

Brimner moved steadily in his defense of southern interests. Following the presidential campaign, he opposed coercion,⁵⁶ approved forcible northern resistance to coercion,⁵⁷ declared his faith in the prospects of a southern confederacy,⁵⁸ and praised the Confederate constitution.⁵⁹ His paper, however, did not live to choose between loyalty and treason when President Lincoln accepted the war policy in early April. Its career of nearly thirty years ended on April 2, the valedictory issue confessing the failure of patronage. Five days later the Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, a lukewarm Douglas organ, pronounced its obituary for the *Pennsylvanian*: "Ill done, bad and faithless servant."⁶⁰

Whereas the *Pennsylvanian* declaimed the horrors of racial fusion and the *Day-Book* the ordained character of Negro subordination, the *Constitution*, of Washington, D. C., thundered the right of secession.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, February 6, 1861.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, August 31, September 16, 18, 26, October 16, 1860, for instance.

⁵² *Ibid.*, September 16, 18, 26, November 5, 1860.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, August 31, October 30, 1860.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1860.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1860.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, December 11, 1860, January 22, February 11, 1861.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, December 11, 1860, March 11, 1861.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, January 22, February 16, 1861.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, March 21, 1861.

⁶⁰ Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*, April 7, 1861.

Rarely expressing itself explicitly on the propriety of slavery, implicit approval of the institution pervaded the interminable harangues commending the course of the secessionists but exhorting them to still more belligerent action. From the premise that the Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court recognized property in man, the *Constitution* advanced the conclusion that abolitionism and coercion amounted to persecution that justified and compelled the southern states to resort to secession. "I advocated secession," declared its editor, William M. Browne, on January 31, 1861, adding that the attempt to enforce the laws in a seceded state would lead to "a war the most calamitous, the most unholy, the most infamous that was ever declared since the world began."

The *Constitution* grew out of the *Washington Globe*, the fighting champion of Jacksonian Democracy. Founded in 1830, the *Globe* in 1845 became the *Union*, which in 1859 made the significant change of name from *Union* to *Constitution*. Browne became proprietor and editor on July 1, 1860. On January 30, 1861, he announced the discontinuance of his paper until he could arrange "its reissue elsewhere under better and more favorable auspices." Following the issue of the next day, Browne removed to "the more genial atmosphere of the Southern Republic," soon thereafter emerging as Assistant Secretary of State of the Confederate States of America.⁶¹

The Douglas organ in the capital, the *States and Union*, scorched Browne as "a sprig of Irish nobility, metamorphosed at London into an English cockney," and added that "it is not surprising that he should next turn up a rampant Southern secessionist."⁶² Browne did more than accept the right of secession, however, for he also defended slavery. He believed that opposition to it rested upon "prejudice and fanaticism," and he described the emancipation of slaves in the British Indies as "a great error."⁶³ He held slavery so vital to the security of the southern states that, regardless of their constitutional position, they should not "submit for one hour to the practical execution of the doctrines of

⁶¹ Alexander H. Stephens, *A Constitutional View of the War between the States*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1868-1870), II, 335, 759.

⁶² *Washington States and Union*, February 2, 1861.

⁶³ *Washington Constitution*, August 10, 1860.

the republican party."⁶⁴ Regarding abolitionism as "a danger, deadly and terrible from its insidiousness," he declared it the duty of southern men to resist it by "every means" in their power.⁶⁵

The *Constitution* enjoyed little influence. It became so unpopular that its subsidy from the government had to be withdrawn, even though the Buchanan administration was desperately in need of friends. It appeared that the whole North accepted one journal's characterization of it as "a crazy disunion sheet."⁶⁶

New England, the stronghold of abolitionism, advanced slight editorial support for slavery. At least three journals, however, did present proslavery views. Only one of these, the *Boston Courier*, received more than a local hearing, but the others, the *Concord Democratic Standard* and the *Newport Advertiser*, approved of slavery in more emphatic terms than did the *Courier*.

The *Courier*, founded in 1824, early joined the Whigs and then in 1857 turned Democratic. In that same year, 1857, George Lunt became editor. A native of Massachusetts and a graduate of Harvard, several times member of the General Court, United States Attorney, orator and classical student, and author of many books on a wide range of subjects, Lunt immediately turned his unusual talents to warring upon abolitionism. His editorials in the *Courier* soon gained for him the reputation of being a defender of "slavery and its attendant evils."⁶⁷ He supported Bell and Everett in the election of 1860.

Lunt was convinced of the natural inferiority of the Negro, and that inferiority he believed would be permanent. He held that at certain times and places the Negro race and society in general profited from slavery. Eventually black men might rise to a condition in which slavery could be abandoned, but the political and social subordination of the race would continue. On this point he declared: ". . . the holding of negroes in slavery, in this country or any other, is a question of circumstances, and not of morality at all. The circumstances which have hith-

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, January 30, 1861.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, August 10, 1860.

⁶⁶ Mt. Vernon (Ohio) *Democratic Banner*, January 1, 1861.

⁶⁷ Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. and index (New York, 1928-1937), XI, 508.

erto regulated their relation in the South may, for aught we know, always continue; or they may, at some indefinite period, yield to a different condition of things. . . ." In those places where the two races existed together, said the *Courier*, the Negroes—"inherently inferior"—must "yield to the necessities of this inferiority, and be subjected to peculiar control." This did not mean, however, that a Negro, "because a negro, is inexorably doomed to perpetual bondage." Such a doctrine would not "afford a rational and stable basis for a social fabric."⁶⁸ If, on the other hand, the Negro is left to "obtain a subsistence by labor, with no one to direct it, he will soon perish, except in that climate, and in those fertile regions adapted by Providence to precisely his organization."⁶⁹ Lunt confessed that he did not know the answer to the question of race relations; he could only advise: "Wait for the development of the Divine plan"

Lunt in 1866 presented in detail his views on the development of the sectional crisis in a book entitled *The Origin of the Late War*. Two assertions contained in that volume summarize very well the philosophy underlying the editorials of the *Courier*. In one Lunt described slavery as "the condition of bondage which it [the Scripture] allows, and under fitting circumstances protects, by the solemn injunction of the Divine Law. . . ."⁷⁰ In the other he declared: "To talk of the boon of liberty to a captive, freed from his shackles but turned out into a desert to perish, is a profanation of a sacred name. Yet such is and must be the practical operation of freedom to the negro in this country."⁷¹

The Concord *Democratic Standard*, a Breckinridge organ, published by John B. Palmer, preached the natural inferiority of the Negro and the civilizing work of slavery. Divinely sanctioned and indispensable to the utilization of the fertile regions of the tropics, slavery alone could prevent a racial war of extermination. It produced great wealth; it preserved the dignity of free white labor; it sustained southern prosperity; and it provided a Heaven-sent relief from the "barbarism," "heathen

⁶⁸ Boston *Courier*, March 29, 1861.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, September 24, 1860.

⁷⁰ George Lunt, *The Origin of the Late War* (New York, 1866), 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

cruelty," and "cannibalism" of Africa. Moreover, "freedom" was a relative term, for no one was really free. Furthermore, the actual, irremediable subordination imposed by Nature far exceeded the subordination imposed by man.⁷² The Newport *Advertiser*, published by James Atkinson and supporting the Fusion ticket, held the Negroes to constitute an inferior race, declared that economic and ethnological laws established and sustained slavery, and compared the condition of American Negro slaves to that of the Irish peasantry, much to the credit of slavery. As for the slaves, "no change of their relations with the whites, either now or at any future day, is to be desired. . . ." Negro slavery was "demanded by the interests of the whole civilized world" and "required by every humane consideration, as regards the slaves themselves. . . ."⁷³

The *American Standard*, of Jersey City, New Jersey, rivaled the Philadelphia *Pennsylvanian* in its abuse of Lincoln, calling him "the Buffoon candidate for president" and "the American Cain."⁷⁴ Founded in 1859 and edited by C. D. Deshler, it supported first Bell, then the Fusion ticket, in the election of 1860. Although denying that it sought "to defend the slaveholder, or the system of slavery in its relation to the whites of the countries where it exists,"⁷⁵ defend slavery it certainly did. It presented no original argument, but rehearsed the contentions that "the degraded and irremediably inferior Negro" found his natural and most useful status in American slavery and that his fecundity in slavery evinced Nature's approval of the institution. Degraded and inferior as the Negro would always be, it became the obligation of superior men to find his intended status. The *Standard* did not believe in the missionary function of slavery but insisted that the history of the Negro race in Africa revealed neither progress nor retrogression, thereby proving the incapacity of the race for change.⁷⁶ On this point, however, the *Standard* was inconsistent, for in picturing the consequences to the Negroes of emancipation—"the most unpronounceable disorders—physical, moral

⁷² These sentiments of the Concord *Democratic Standard* were contained in editorials of the following dates: September 8, November 24, 1860, January 5, February 2, 1861.

⁷³ Newport *Advertiser*, December 5, 1860.

⁷⁴ Jersey City *American Standard*, September 6, 1860, April 12, 1861, respectively.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, September 18, 1860.

⁷⁶ These views were presented in two long editorials, *ibid.*, October 9, November 7, 1860.

and mental"—it did assume the eventual response of the race to training under slavery:

No description of Hell has ever yet been indited or conceived that in any degree approximates to what would be the fearful case of these 4,000,000 slaves if they were to be granted that instantaneous freedom which *pseudo* philanthropists of the Republican school bawl about as a blessing and a right, but which—unless preceded by generations and generations of training—would inevitably prove a capital curse.⁷⁷

The Newark *Evening Journal*, also of New Jersey, was a Breckinridge organ edited by Edward N. Fuller. One of the two or three most bitterly anti-war papers in the North, it expended far more energy in resisting coercion than in moralizing about slavery, but it did present its views in unmistakable terms on April 11, 1861:

We believe slaveholding is not sinful; we believe that as a mere question of political economy it may or may not rightfully exist in every State if the people so will, and that it ought to be protected in the common territories of the United States; we believe that the negro as a race is unfit for freedom and that his case is better as a slave in this country than in his natural condition or in any other condition which the wit of man or the Providence of God has provided for him. All this we believe, and firmly. . . .

The only well-known proslavery newspaper of the North not on the Atlantic seacoast was the *Chicago Times*. It had been edited by James W. Sheahan from its birth in 1854 to July 31, 1860, when it was combined with the pro-Buchanan *Chicago Herald* under the proprietorship of Cyrus Hall McCormick, the editorship of E. W. McComas, and the name of *Times and Herald*. It resumed the name of *Times* on November 27, 1860. It was sold to Wilbur F. Storey on June 1, 1861, and Storey himself took over the editorial duties, remaining in control for more than twenty years. Sheahan, a Marylander, McComas, a Virginian, and Storey, a Vermonter, all ardently defended state rights. Under both Sheahan and McComas the *Times* supported Douglas⁷⁸ and vigorously

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1860.

⁷⁸ The incompleteness of the files of the *Chicago Times and Herald* has led students into error or uncertainty as to its politics in the election of 1860. See Donald B. Sanger, "The *Chicago Times* and the Civil War," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids, 1914-), XVII (1931), 559; Mrs. L. E. Ellis, "The *Chicago Times* during the Civil War," in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Springfield, 1906-

opposed Republicanism, abolitionism, and race equality, but under McComas it retreated from the warm espousal of popular sovereignty that had marked it under Sheahan.

While the *Times* defended slavery, it did not merit the characterization of "fiercely proslavery," given it by the *Chicago Press and Tribune*.⁷⁹ Preferring to use economic and constitutional arguments to resist the antislavery forces, it only infrequently and almost incidentally passed judgment on slavery itself, as, for instance, when on January 17, 1860, in reviewing a sermon delivered by the distinguished Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Nathan L. Rice, it said:

Having established what slavery is, the next step was to prove that it was not, in itself, and in certain circumstances, a sin, and that good Christians might be slaveholders. And this he did prove most clearly—from familiar facts, from the history of the Church for eighteen hundred years—and from the Bible itself

"Amalgamation and negro equality," said the *Times*, is a "strange negro-mania" which, "from the pulpit, the rostrum and the stage," the abolitionists drive into "our brains like a wedge, maddening our mawkish sentiment, and crushing out our common sense."⁸⁰ "The abstract idea of the *equality of races*, and the Utopian dream of a human level, have so far engrossed them as to exclude all calculation based upon practical life and common sense." Actually, emancipation rested with a higher power than theirs; it would come only when slavery no longer comported with "the moral and physical laws of the world."⁸¹

In a curious editorial entitled "Free Labor," the *Times* assailed the "dignity" of labor. While not once using the word "slavery," the repeated allusion to "free labor" suggested that the evils complained of might not be present in another kind of labor—that is, in slave labor. A stinging indictment of a system which persuaded the toiling masses to feel that the dignity of labor compensated for the absence of material

1936), 1932, p. 137; William T. Hutchinson, *Cyrus Hall McCormick*, 2 vols. (New York, 1930-1935), II, 45-47. The Library of Congress has a copy of the *Times and Herald* for election day, November 6, 1860. At the head of the editorial column there is a short but fervent appeal in behalf of Douglas.

⁷⁹ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, August 16, 1860, quoted in Hutchinson, *McCormick*, II, 45.

⁸⁰ *Chicago Times and Herald*, October 23, 1860.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, November 21, 1860.

necessities and comforts, its relevancy to the slavery controversy appeared in a summarizing statement:

Of one thing "Labor" may rest assured, and that is, that amid all this highflown eulogy and professed devotion to "free labor," there never was a people more humbugged, robbed and betrayed than the free laboring people of the Northern States, nor ever one more saddled and ridden by a pack of arrant demagogues and political knaves.⁸²

The *Times* continued its defense of slavery after the war had begun and it had itself rallied to the preservation of the Union. On June 26 it declared that the northern soldiers, then already in the field, did not "desire, and never will submit to social and political equality of rights between themselves and the degraded, barbarous serfs of the cotton and rice fields." On another occasion it asserted that "no greater privileges should be asked for negroes than for oxen and asses, for lager beer and swine, for gold and silver, or 'stumptail' money,"⁸³ and a week later insisted that the liberation of the slaves, "either general or partial, . . . is objectionable."⁸⁴

With the possible exception of the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, the *Times* was the most powerful Democratic newspaper west of the Atlantic seaboard, approving Douglas journals and disapproving Lincoln organs quoting it frequently. On January 12, 1860, it claimed a larger circulation "by many hundreds, and perhaps thousands" than any other paper in Chicago. During the year following, however, its circulation declined rapidly, and under the ownership of McCormick, who had hoped to use it to reunite the Democracy and avert civil war, it failed to be even self-sustaining.⁸⁵ Later, its fortunes improved under the colorful Storey.

In addition to the *Times*, a half dozen other newspapers of the Middle West ventured defenses of slavery that were more than mere apologies or extenuations. Of these six—the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and the Hamilton *Telegraph*, of Ohio, the Niles *Republican*, of Michigan, the New Albany *Ledger*, of Indiana, the Peoria *Democratic Union*, of Illinois, and the Muscatine *Review*, of Iowa—not one exhibited a

⁸² Reprinted in the *Hartford Post*, February 15, 1861.

⁸³ *Chicago Times*, June 19, 1861.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, June 26, 1861.

⁸⁵ Hutchinson, *McCormick*, II, 47.

militant or persistent devotion to proslavery principles. All, however, defended slavery expressly, although infrequently. All were Douglas papers,⁸⁶ and three—those in Cleveland, New Albany, and Peoria—were published in “second cities.”

The *Plain Dealer* described slavery as a labor system under which Negroes earned “an honest livelihood for themselves according to the great command” and under which they were “more happy and contented than any other race of people on earth, because . . . better provisioned, provided, and cared for than any other race of working men.” It believed Negroes better off in America under slavery than in Africa with its cruelties, famines, and diseases; and it asserted that any one familiar with the facts “could come to no other conclusion than that American slavery is a God-send to the African Race.”⁸⁷

The Hamilton *Telegraph* declared that the permanent happiness of the Negro could be promoted only through his own labor, but that he must be forced to that labor, as his laziness, like his color, was a condition for which he was not responsible. Moreover, continued the *Telegraph* in the same editorial, “the harmonious system established by God” never included freedom for the Negro, for He “has given no right to man that He has not adapted man for exercising, and the fact of the negro being, as a consequence of his fallen and miserable condition, thus unadapted, proves that he is incapable of enjoying liberty.”⁸⁸

The Niles *Republican* also saw in American slavery the will of God. Turning to the Republicans it asked: “If slavery was such an ungodly institution as many fanatics of the present day believe, how is it that God could establish such a government as this, when he knew a portion of it would be dedicated to slavery?” Thus the Republicans would “make out God a cruel and inconsistent being.” “Some men were born to govern, others to be governed.” American slavery brought greater happiness to the Negroes; and it served to civilize and Christianize

⁸⁶ In this connection it might be mentioned that following the merger of the *Herald* and the *Times* in Chicago, July, 1860, there was neither a Bell nor a Breckinridge organ west of Ohio that was of more than local importance.

⁸⁷ These views of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* were presented in an editorial of January 12, 1861.

⁸⁸ Hamilton *Telegraph*, December 27, 1860.

them. God's purpose was "to send the Gospel to every creature, and prepare the way for the coming of the King of Kings."⁸⁹

The New Albany *Daily Ledger*, while insisting that slavery was "vital" to the "political, social, and monetary existence" of the South,⁹⁰ gave more emphasis to contentions that abolition would bring ruin to the free white labor of the North through the competition of immigrating blacks.⁹¹ It declared slaves far better off than the free Negroes of the North, and denounced the "mock philanthropists" intent upon "reducing the slave population of the South to the miserable degradation of the negro North!"⁹²

The Peoria *Democratic Union*, "Official Paper of the City," devoted its energies mainly to pleas for conciliation. Opposing the demands of all radicals, northern and southern alike, it asserted that slavery "constitutes the very life blood of the people of the southern states" and insisted that unprofitableness alone banished slavery from the northern states and that morality had nothing to do with it.⁹³ While on the whole saying little about slavery, it did present the thesis repeatedly urged by George Lunt in the Boston *Courier*: slavery, at certain times and in certain places, was both moral and desirable. The *Union*, however, spoke more abstractly than the *Courier*, as on October 18, 1860:

The people of this government are not prepared for universal freedom or universal slavery. Our country, like the world, has hitherto flourished in the diversity of its institutions. It is a blending of different nationalities with diversified habits, customs, and capacities, and it would be neither possible nor desirable, as it is now constituted, to fit all of its heterogeneous population to the same procrustean bed.

Liberty may prove a curse and slavery a blessing, where there is a want of fitness for the enjoyment of the former, and an exact adaptation to the latter, as the past history of the world has abundantly demonstrated. Why, then, should visionary theorists seek to force an unnatural condition of things upon this nation?

⁸⁹ These views of the Niles *Republican* were contained in an editorial of March 30, 1861.

⁹⁰ New Albany *Daily Ledger*, December 1, 1860.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, October 19, 24, 1860.

⁹² *Ibid.*, October 19, 1860.

⁹³ Peoria *Democratic Union*, January 19, 1861.

Finally, the *Muscatine Review* declared that slavery was not a sin and denounced the Republicans for their efforts to arouse in the northern people a belief that it was. It compared the condition of the Negro in Africa with that of the Negro in the South under slavery and concluded that the black man profited from slavery. This did not lead to support for a renewal of the slave trade, for the *Review* believed that America produced all the slaves she needed and that slave hunting in Africa excited destructive wars among the tribes.⁹⁴

A few additional city journals and some local papers, especially in villages near the border states, occasionally expressed proslavery sentiments. Except for color and warmth, however, they added little or nothing to the stock arguments of the northern press: Editors proclaimed the natural inferiority and dependence of the Negro, the civilizing, Christianizing, and social-control functions of slavery, and the greater security and contentment of the slave over his kinsman in Africa and over the free white laborer of the North or of Europe; they reviewed the Biblical arguments and read therein the will of God; they quoted statistics to establish slave fecundity and then interpreted that fecundity as revealing the natural and ordained position of the Negro; and they declared American slavery justified because indispensable in the production of the great southern staples.

These contentions in the defense of slavery were by no means peculiar to the northern press. They were also part and parcel of the southern argument and were to be found everywhere in the controversial literature of slavery. They may be read today in dusty volumes bearing names once familiar to all southern men of letters: Thomas Cooper, James Henley Thornwell, Thomas R. Dew, William G. Simms, George Fitzhugh, James Henry Hammond, William Harper, Albert T. Bledsoe, Thornton Stringfellow, Edmund Ruffin, Fred A. Ross, William G. Brownlow, and Josiah C. Nott. While they made up the proslavery brief of northern editors and while they were to be found in the southern defense as well, these contentions did not, however, comprise the whole of the southern argument. The northern case might be said to

⁹⁴ These sentiments of the *Muscatine Review* were presented in an editorial of April 16, 1861.

have consisted of more or less independent points which editors listed, enumerated, and reiterated, thus calculating the advantages of slavery much as they might those of a projected railroad or a free land policy. With Southerners it was different. The most idealistic of the southern defenders of slavery felt themselves to be entrusted with nothing less than the guardianship of a mode of living, perhaps with nothing less than the preservation of a civilization. The authors of the classic *Pro-Slavery Argument*, for instance, held slavery to embrace a philosophy of life, an ordered regime wherein the institution sustained the economic, political, and cultural superstructures of society, avoiding pauperism and charity, giving stability to republican institutions, adding efficacy to Christianity, and preserving harmony and morality in the whole realm of human relationships.⁹⁵ The contentions of northern editors rarely approached in versatility or profundity the "way of life" contemplated by the "positive good" school of southern thinkers. Only Van Evrie and Bennett, both with backgrounds of southern associations, revealed some consciousness of this sense of the ubiquity of slavery in the social order of the South.

The limitations of the northern argument inhered in part in the newspaper medium, for editors wrote under handicaps of time, space, and clientele. Essayists and pamphleteers, largely free from these restraints, presented a better case, as, indeed, they did in the South. The best of northern proslavery argument therefore appeared not in the newspaper press but in speeches, pamphlets, and books, like those of Nathan L. Rice, Samuel Seabury, David Christy, John H. Hopkins, Nehemiah Adams, Charles O'Connor, John H. Van Evrie, and C. Chauncey Burr. Even here the argument was inferior to that of the foremost southern defenders of slavery, for the approach was commonly specific or unilateral, never as broad and comprehensive as that of *The Pro-Slavery Argument*. Clergymen Rice, Seabury, and Hopkins, for instance, thumbed their Bibles to find support for slavery, while Van Evrie and Burr featured colored plates of the human anatomy to prove the ethnological argument of the irremediable inferiority of the Negro

⁹⁵ For an excellent study of southern proslavery thought, see William S. Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1935).

as the mandate for slavery. Yet the limitations of the newspaper medium do not explain the failure of northern editors to exhibit conversance with the more specialized and exhaustive defenses of slavery, northern or southern, or even to reveal an awareness of the many retorts and would-be *coups de grace* to the antislavery books they hated most, Hinton Rowan Helper's *Impending Crisis* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In short, northern proslavery editors evinced little familiarity with the best of proslavery literature.

Other considerations must also enter into the appraisal of both the quality and the quantity of northern proslavery declarations. Thus, few northern editors grew up with slavery; instead, they learned its dialectic with their politics. Knowing little of the treatises on slavery, pro or con, they filled their columns day after day with the products of the word-mill on Capitol Hill. The problem might be a moral one, this way or that, but the solution must be political, and so northern editors, like southern, played the only game they knew. Subject to the prejudices of their individual positions, they wrote subjectively, passing judgment not on questions of abstract morality but on issues in practical politics. What they said on slavery itself was usually incidental to their parries and thrusts in the great game of politics.

Many editors must have seen little reason for express commitment when their defense of slavery was implicit in what they said about John Brown, the Dred Scott decision, the personal-liberty laws, and a hundred other subjects. Many must have felt that they could say little new on a subject that had been debated for forty years, while others must have conceded the futility of argument, however eloquent, original, or emphatic. Still others must have submitted to the profane mandates of party favor and circulation. On the other hand, however, it was doubtless true that party advantage, editorial animus, and circulation goals were on occasion served as well by proslavery heterodoxy as by antislavery orthodoxy.

Furthermore, proslavery editors of 1860-1861 fully understood that the great bulwark of American slavery was the Constitution. Few of them had any hopes of converting the North to an approval of slavery itself, Van Evrie alone persevering in a campaign of "enlightenment."

The rights of the states and the sanctity of property rights, on the contrary, afforded slavery a really effective defense—for the time being. Even the "Black Republicans" subscribed to constitutional processes, although not above a bit of short-cutting now and then. Slavery in the southern states thus owed far more to those northern editors, including Republicans, who respected federalism and "due process" than it did to those journalists who subscribed to the institution itself. The realization of this by proslavery editors is evidenced by the fact that even the frankest of them wrote largely of the political and legal rights of slaveholders and not of the institution of slavery. Hence the volume and perhaps the quality of proslavery argument was materially affected.

The value of northern proslavery editorials as an index to northern popular sentiment was further reduced by the status of a number of the best known proslavery newspapers. Van Evrie, by all odds the most prolific of northern proslavery editors, was regarded as a crusading Negrophobist, and, writing with what Professor Arthur C. Cole has called "pseudoscientific gusto," he made his *New York Day-Book* less a newspaper than a trade journal. Bennett, while in some respects a trail-blazer in American journalism, was first of all a sensation vendor, and through his *New York Herald* he found a market for proslavery asseverations along with reviews of his own romantic adventures and fistic misadventures. The *New York News*, edited by the mayor's brother, was the favorite and favored organ of a local political machine. The *Philadelphia Pennsylvanian* and the *Washington Constitution* were the kept and dying spokesmen of a repudiated federal administration. The *Chicago Times* was owned by one native Virginian and edited by another. Among metropolitan papers, only the *New York Journal of Commerce* and the *Boston Courier* spoke without apparent grounds for public distrust. Suspicion of the proslavery journals increased with the coming of the war. Some of them soon perished, but all of the better known ones that survived became consistently or intermittently "peace papers." Some became full-fledged Copperhead organs, and several felt the rough hand of censorship. It by no means follows, however, that all "treason sheets" believed in the institution of slavery. Copperhead papers appear to have numbered between a hundred and a hundred and fifty, while

perhaps a third of that number would be a fair estimate of northern proslavery journals on the eve of the war.⁹⁶

Finally, northern argument may have suffered from the deliberate rejection of certain of the southern tenets. In their championship of Negro slavery, southern writers pictured a social order in which slavery bestowed its blessings not on black men alone but on white men, too, conferring on them a moral and cultural worth that exalted them above the men of a free society. Many of these writers paid little deference to northern feelings but shot their bolts straight and true. William Harper asserted that the degradation of slaves had "the effect of making probity more strict, the pride of character more high, the sense of honor more strong, than is commonly found where this institution does not exist."⁹⁷ James Henry Hammond described Southerners as "a people whose men are proverbially brave, intellectual and hospitable, and whose women are unaffectedly chaste, devoted to domestic life, and happy in it, can neither be degraded nor demoralized, whatever their institutions may be," adding that "my decided opinion is, that our system of Slavery contributes largely to the development and culture of these high and noble qualities."⁹⁸ On another occasion Hammond declared that "slavery does indeed create an aristocracy—an aristocracy of talents, of virtue, of generosity and courage."⁹⁹ George Fitzhugh said of the slaveholder that "he is lofty and independent in his sentiments, generous, affectionate, brave and eloquent; he is superior to the Northerner in every thing but the arts of thrift."¹⁰⁰ "We are," he continued, "better husbands, better fathers, better friends, and better neighbors

⁹⁶ The New York *Journal of Commerce*, August 13 and 15, 1861, listed 154 newspapers "opposed to the present unholy war." Similar lists appeared in the New York *Daily News*, August 12, and in the New York *Day-Book*, August 14; cited in Mott, *American Journalism*, 355. While not all of these "peace papers" were Copperhead, some definitely Copperhead papers escaped the lists.

⁹⁷ William Gilmore Simms (ed.), *The Pro-Slavery Argument* (Charleston, 1852), 62. This was a collection of essays and letters written during the previous twenty years by William Harper, James Henry Hammond, Thomas R. Dew, and Simms.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120-21.

⁹⁹ Speech in the House of Representatives, February 1, 1836, *Debates in Congress*, 24 Congress, 1 Session, 2460; quoted in Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought*, 289.

¹⁰⁰ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or The Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, 1854), 244.

than our Northern brethren."¹⁰¹ Edmund Ruffin expressed about the same sentiments.¹⁰² The acceptance of such arguments by Northerners would have entailed an apostasy to which only Van Evrie and, on occasion, Bennett would have been willing to consent. While it may not be demonstrable that northern proslavery editors rejected this thinking, it is clear that they left it unused. They might and did defend slavery, but in their own ways for their own good reasons.

The study of the northern press on the eve of the Civil War thus reveals that the institution of slavery found highly vocal defenders among northern journals, but that these were really formidable only in New York City. While their number may be somewhat disconcerting to pious Northerners today, it was comparatively very small—comprising perhaps somewhat less than two per cent of northern newspapers. The value of their proslavery declarations as an index to northern proslavery sentiment remains uncertain, for many disturbing factors intervene. Actually, they afforded slavery far less pragmatic defense than journals concerned merely with the preservation of the American constitutional system. Qualitatively, their contribution was intelligent but undistinguished. Little of it was written by editors obviously familiar with the versatility of the southern argument, while some of the southern contentions may even have been deliberately rejected by many of the northern defenders of slavery.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁰² Avery O. Craven, *Edmund Ruffin, Southerner* (New York, 1932), 139-40.

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