

urge you to reflect on, and pray over the subject. This is all *they* can do for you, *you* must work out your own deliverance with fear and trembling, and with the direction and blessing of God, *you can do it*. Northern women may labor to produce a correct public opinion at the North, but if Southern women sit down in listless indifference and criminal idleness, public opinion cannot be rectified and purified at the South. It is manifest to every reflecting mind, that slavery must be abolished; the era in which we live, and the light which is overspreading the whole world on this subject, clearly show that the time cannot be distant when it will be done. Now there are only two ways in which it can be effected, by moral power or physical force, and it is for *you* to choose which of these you prefer. Slavery always has, and always will produce insurrections wherever it exists, because it is a violation of the natural order of things, and no human power can much longer perpetuate it. The opposers of abolitionists fully believe this; one of them remarked to me not long since, there is no doubt there will be a most terrible overturning at the South in a few years, such cruelty and wrong, must be visited with Divine vengeance soon. Abolitionists believe, too, that this must inevitably be the case if you do not repent, and they are not willing to leave you to perish without entreating you, to save yourselves from destruction; well may they say with the apostle, "am I then your enemy because I tell you truth," and warn you to flee from impending judgments. . . .

The *women of the South can overthrow* this horrible system of oppression and cruelty, licentiousness and wrong. Such appeals to your legislatures would be irresistible, for there is something in the heart of man which *will bend under moral suasion*. There is a swift witness for truth in his bosom, which *will respond to truth* when it is uttered with calmness and dignity. If you could obtain but six signatures to such a petition in only one state, I would say, send up that petition, and be not in the least discouraged by the scoffs and jeers of the heartless, or the resolution of the house to lay it on the table. It will be a great thing if the subject can be introduced into your legislatures in any way, even by *women*, and *they* will be the most likely to introduce it there in the best possible manner, as a matter of *morals and religion*, not of expediency or politics. You may petition, too, the different ecclesiastical bodies of the slave states. Slavery must be attacked with the whole power of truth and the sword of the spirit. You must take it up on *Christian* ground, and fight against it with Christian weapons, whilst your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And *you are now* loudly called upon by the cries of the widow and the orphan, to arise and gird yourselves for this great moral conflict, "with the whole armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

6. T. R. Sullivan Attacks Immediate Abolition, 1835

The design of these Letters is to convince you that those gentlemen at the North, who are opposed to Immediate Abolition, are not hostile to the welfare of yourselves and your brethren in bonds; and that, accordingly, you can by no means be certain that you are promoting the elevation of your race and the removal of Slavery, when you give your sympathy and influence to the system and measures

From T. R. Sullivan, *Letters Against the Immediate Abolition of Slavery* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray and Co., 1835), pp. 1-2, 3-5, 7-8, 9-10, 13-14, 18, 22-25, 27.

of the Immediate Abolitionists. They come from one who is a friend to the children of Africa, and who desires, in humble imitation of your Master and his, to be the servant of you all. He addresses you as the free *Blacks*, not reproachfully, but because he does not feel, and thinks you should not, that you have cause to be ashamed of being designated by the color with which your Creator has tinged your skin. He addresses himself to the free blacks of the *non-slave-holding states*, because he would think it dishonorable to interfere with the legal property or political rights of a slave owner at a distance, as he would not dare to do before his face; and he confesses that he should not venture, were he at the South, to call together and address, on any subject connected with Slavery, the free black population of a slave-holding state, without the general consent of the slave owners. He calls himself your friend because he is writing in opposition to men whom he regards as your false friends, without questioning that they are sincere in deeming themselves your best friends.

The African negro *may* not be able to compete with the leading European races in commerce and the arts, in education and literature, in legislation, politics, and government, (though this has not been proved by a sufficiently long and fair experiment;) he *may* not be naturally equal to the white man in intellectual capacities, (for, as I said, it has not been proved,) but he is his equal in natural *moral characteristics*, and perhaps excels him in a predisposition to some virtues of a high order. The negro, by native disposition, is good-natured, obliging and affectionate, grateful for favors, forgetful of injuries, susceptible to kindness, and ready in deference to superiority in character and station. He is, accordingly, material for peaceable neighbors and quiet citizens. . . .

[T]he Immediate Abolitionist has mistaken the interest of the cause which he advocates, and that of the country he would serve, your interest and his own. . . .

The system which I thus designate, consists in *commencing the agitation of a legal, constitutional, or political reform* (for whatever name beside be given to Immediate Abolition, it is this also), *by measures adapted to inflame the passions of the multitude*, including the women and children, the boarding-school misses and factory girls, in short, "man, woman, and child" upon the avowed plan of turning the current of popular opinion at the North so strongly in favor of the principles of northern anti-slavery, that the "man-stealers" and man-owners at the South shall feel the necessity of voluntarily abrogating the "laws" by which slavery is allowed and fortified in the slave states. . . .

I am not unjust to the American Anti-Slavery Society, and its active friends, when I illustrate their system of influence . . . at the large and promiscuous assemblies by them called together. There I have seen woman's tears testifying to the portion of the audience, in an appeal to which the anti-slavery agitator best loves to indulge; and I have seen that appeal enforced by allusions to points on which woman is the most sensitive, (in relation, that is, to the illicit intercourse to which the relation of master and slave is said to give opportunity) at which the face of modest woman was turned from the speaker, and covered from the [spectator's] eye. Who does not know that *popular art* is never more triumphant than when it can enlist the *peculiar* feelings (whether of party, denomination, or sex) on the side of what is called public justice, or sound policy, or righteous indignation? . . .

Suppose all New England one great Anti-Slavery Society, on the principles of Immediate Abolition, "man, woman, and child"? What would be the effect at the

South? What but to double lock the fetters of slavery? what but to fix the slave statutes even as the laws of the Medes and Persians? what but to render them, still more than now of necessity they are, like the laws of Draco, which were said to be written in blood? Can any reflecting man think that such are the means to abolish slavery in this country; to pierce, (according to the style of the northern enthusiast) the "criminal," "man-stealer," man-owner, and man-seller of the South with the pang of repentance, till he shall restore to his brother the stolen birthright of freedom, and substitute for the code of oppression, laws consistent with the principles of eternal justice, and the stifled calls of humanity? We know our spirited southern brethren better. We know ourselves better. We know human nature better. Is it by such means, my respected friends of African descent, that your brethren in bonds are to be released from their thralldom? . . .

Every community, from a nation down to a village, contains a class of ardent and restless men, standing ever ready to agitate, heat, and control the multitude, who, as a multitude, are always like the sea, passive, fluctuating, and easy to be raised into tumult, and while harmless, when undisturbed, as each particular drop that contributes to form it, becoming, when agitated, like the sea swelled into violence and moving in mass, the most terrible of the agents which the Almighty holds in the hollow of his hand. When persons of this description start an excitement, the wise and moderate stand aloof, waiting a favorable crisis for interposing to smooth the waves and direct the storm, while the cooler and more calculating among the unprincipled keep still, watching how they may turn to their private advantage the commotion that its less wary authors have stirred up for their own. Not all among the calm are indifferent; not all among the sanguine are visionary; not all among the enthusiastic are wild. But when the passionate sway the crowd, the sagacious begin to be doubtful, the benevolent to grow cold, and the virtuous to feel timid, in relation to the end proposed, how excellent soever and desirable in itself. . . .

This use of popular excitement, aided by combination, is the more objectionable and alarming, on account of the extent of the field on which its power has been tried; especially regarded as including the intermixture of female influence in legal and political concerns. Woman, moving regularly and calmly in her own sphere, is as lovely as the evening star, and at once serviceable and delightful, like the planet of night. It is as unbecoming to her to appear in the world *dis-orbed*, as unattired. But something more than violation of decorum is here involved. When woman leaves her place, and with combined voice and action, mingles with men in the struggles of ambition and power, nothing that poet ever dreamed of the disastrous shock of comets, striking our trembling globe, out-measures the evil that might follow from her political interference in times which try men's souls, when fear of change perplexes the wise, and the hearts of the boldest fail at that which may come upon the earth. . . .

No man can attain true mental independence who permits domestic entreaty or dictation to deter him from forming his mind, or exerting his influence in the manner that unbiased examination and a deliberate conscience would prescribe. And it is wrong and reprehensible, accordingly, to make use of combined female influence to work upon the feelings of men, when legal and political changes are proposed. Women, from their natural excitability and domestic training, are as unfit to take

part in the stern and stormy scenes of legislation and politics, as, from their physical delicacy, to wield the axe in the woods, or the hammer at the forge. . . .

Southern slavery, the subject wherefrom the General Excitement, in this violent and systematic manner attempted, grew, is one in regard to which the citizens of the non-slave-holding States have no right to *originate action*, but which it belongs *exclusively* to the slave States, severally, to manage; and that accordingly for citizens at the North to act in it at all, except by cooperation in measures begun at the South, is justly regarded there as MEDDLING with the rights and customs of the Southern States in an injurious and AGGRESSIVE manner. . . .

The guilt of slavery in this country does not lie at the door of the slaveholders. They should not be expected to work their own temporal ruin to expiate an error having its origin in another country and in other times. The evil of slavery was entailed upon the United States by the mother country during the period of our colonial dependence. The colonies made repeated efforts to prevent the importation of the slaves into this country, but could not obtain the consent of the English government. Mr. Jefferson alludes distinctly to this fact in his *draft* of the Declaration of Independence. Though the United States were unable at the adoption of the Constitution to relieve themselves from the burden of slavery, they were the first to prohibit the prosecution of the slave trade. . . .

It is obvious that if this institution could not be abolished in 1789, the difficulties in the way of it must have multiplied since, especially considering the commotion and exasperation, to which it has given rise of late. A deep-rooted and long-growing evil is not to be removed by sudden and violent means. . . . It is not our duty to aggravate, by false zeal and political aggression, the natural retribution that slavery—regarded as “an institution founded on violence”—carries with it. . . .

If the Immediate Abolitionists go on till the passions of the North and South are brought into collision, the non-slave-holding States, so far as they concur with the northern agitators, *put themselves in the wrong*, and just to the degree that they might have effectually counteracted the instruments of that collision, they will be *responsible for the consequences*. . . . Anti-slavery, prosecuted in this manner any further, or publicly advocated in any manner, (for it is now too late for gradual abolition societies, composed of men of wisdom and moderation,) will keep sharpening the irritability of the passionate, and chafing the temper of the fiery, and, which is more formidable, will rouse the just indignation of the rational, the good, and the patriotic, till our national government totters to its fall. . . .

In such a conflict, New England would have the disadvantage and the odium of being the aggressive party, and of seeing her standard waving on the unrighteous side. For the excitement which now threatens our sectional concord and national union with destruction, will burden us with the guilt of SEDITION and AGGRESSION, unless *timely* and *effectual* measures are adopted by us, to restrain the public agitators of a subject, with which the non-slave-holding States have *no right to interfere*, but which it belongs “*exclusively*” to the slave States to control; and in which the former cannot interfere without violating the national compact, and invading the right of property and the tenure of personal security and human life at the South, in an injurious and exasperating manner, and to a possible extent, at the thought of which humanity shudders, and patriotism and public justice stand aghast!

7. The Antiabolitionists Ridicule Antislavery Radicals



PRACTICAL AMALGAMATION.

“Practical Amalgamation,” a color lithograph made by Edward W. Clay in 1839, presents a reversal of the existing “sexual order” under slavery—an antiabolitionist nightmare of what emancipation would bring. *Practical Amalgamation*, 1839 lithograph by Edward W. Clay, The Library Company of Philadelphia.

8. J. H. Hammond Defends Slavery, 1836

Allow me now to examine more closely the real designs of those Abolitionists, the means by which they will attempt to effect them, and the probable result. Their designs are very succinctly stated in the volume which I hold in my hand. It is a treatise on this subject, entitled “Jay’s Inquiry,” written by William Jay, a judge, I believe, of the State of New York, and a son—a most degenerate son—of the distinguished John Jay. More than five thousand copies of this work, I am told, have been sold. He says, “*The society aimed at effecting the following objects,*

“1st. The immediate abolition of slavery throughout the United States.

“2d. As a necessary consequence, the suppression of the American slave trade.

“3d. The ultimate elevation of the black population to an equality with the white, in civil and religious privileges.”—P. 141.

Sir, the abolition of slavery can be expected to be effected in but three ways: through the medium of the slaveholder, or the Government, or the slaves themselves.

I think I may say that any appeal to the slaveholders will be in vain. In the whole history of the question of emancipation in Europe or America, I do not remember a dozen instances of masters freeing their slaves, at least during their own lifetime, from any qualms of conscience. If they are seized with these qualms, they usually sell their slaves first, and then give in their adhesion to the cause, as has been the case with some whom I could mention.

The Abolitionist can appeal only to the hopes or fears or interest of the slaveholder, to induce him to emancipate his slaves. So far as our hopes are concerned, I believe I can say we are perfectly satisfied. We have been born and bred in a slave country; our habits are accommodated to them, and so far as we have been able to observe other states of society abroad, we see nothing to invite us to exchange our own; but, on the contrary, every thing to induce us to prefer it above all others.

As to our fears, I know it has been said by a distinguished Virginian, and quoted on this floor, "that the fire bell in Richmond never rings at night, but the mother presses her infant more closely to her breast, in dread of servile insurrection." Sir, it is all a flourish. There may be nervous men and timid women, whose imaginations are haunted with unwonted fears, among us, as there are in all communities on earth, but in no part of the world have men of ordinary firmness less fear of danger from their operatives than we have. The fires which in a few years have desolated Normandy and Anjou—the great machine burning in the heart of England—the bloody and eternal struggles of the Irish Catholics—and the mobs which for some years past have figured in the northern States, burning convents, tearing down houses, spreading dismay and ruin through their cities, and even taking life—are appropriate illustrations of the peace and security of a community whose laborers are all free. On the other hand, during the two hundred years that slavery has existed in this country, there has, I believe, been but one serious insurrection, and that one very limited in its extent. . . .

If you will look over the world, you will find that in all those countries where slavery has been found unprofitable, it has been abolished. In northern latitudes, where no great agricultural staple is produced, and where care, skill, and a close economy, enter largely into the elements of production, free labor has been found more valuable than that of slaves. You will there find labor usually exercised in small combinations, under the immediate eye of a watchful and frugal master. I speak more particularly of those who cultivate the soil; but the large masses of mechanical operatives who are brought together form no exception to the principle. They are classified. There is an accurate division of their labor; each branch of it requires peculiar art, and, in the higher departments, a degree of skill must be attained, to produce which, stronger stimulants are necessary than can be ordinarily applied to slaves.

In such countries the dominant classes have also found it to their advantage to permit each individual to accumulate for himself, and to deprive him of a portion of his earnings, sufficient for their purposes, through the operations of the Government. Hence the partial emancipation of the serfs of the continent of Europe; hence the abandonment of villeinage in England; and hence the emancipation of slaves in the free States of this Union. But in southern latitudes, where great agricultural staples are produced, and where not only a large combination of labor under the direction of one head is required, but it is also necessary that the connexion between the operatives and that head should be absolute and indissoluble, domestic slavery is indispensable. To such a country it is as natural as the clime itself—as the birds and

beasts to which that climate is congenial. The camel loves the desert; the reindeer seeks everlasting snows; the wild fowl gather to the waters; and the eagle wings his flight above the mountains. It is equally the order of Providence that slavery should exist among a planting people, beneath a southern sun. There the laborer must become a fixture of the soil. His task is not from day to day, nor from month to month; but from season to season, and from year to year. He must be there to clear, to break, to plant, to till, to gather, to fallow, and to clear again; and he must be kept there by a never-ceasing, unavoidable, and irresistible force. The system of "*strikes*" so universally practiced in all other kinds of labor, would desolate a planting country in five years. If, in the heat of the crop, when the loss of one or two days even may irreparably ruin it, the laborers were to abandon the fields and demand higher wages, the owner would have no other alternative than to say to them, "work, and take enough to satisfy yourselves"—which would, of course, be all. Sir, it is not the interest of the planters of the South to emancipate their slaves, and it never can be shown to be so.

Slavery is said to be an evil; that it impoverishes the people, and destroys their morals. If it be an evil, it is one to us alone, and we are contented with it—why should others interfere? But it is no evil. On the contrary, I believe it to be the greatest of all the great blessings which a kind Providence has bestowed upon our glorious region. For without it, our fertile soil and our fructifying climate would have been given to us in vain. And as to its impoverishing and demoralizing influence, the simple and irresistible answer to that is, that the history of the short period during which we have enjoyed it has rendered our southern country proverbial for its wealth, its genius, and its manners. . . .

The only remaining chance for the Abolitionists to succeed in their nefarious schemes will be by appealing to the slaves themselves; and, say what they will, this is the great object at which they aim. For this are all their meetings, publications, lectures, and missions; to excite a servile insurrection. . . . This will be no easy task. Sir, it is a proverb, that no human being is perfectly contented with his lot, and it may be true that some strolling emissary may extract, occasionally, complaints from southern slaves, and spread them before the world. But such instances are rare. As a class, I say it boldly, there is not a happier, more contented race upon the face of the earth. I have been born and brought up in the midst of them, and, so far as my knowledge and experience extend, I should say they have every reason to be happy. Lightly tasked, well clothed, well fed—far better than the free laborers of any country in the world, our own and those perhaps of the other States of this Confederacy alone excepted—their lives and persons protected by the law, all their suffering alleviated by the kindest and most interested care, and their domestic affections cherished and maintained, at least so far as I have known, with conscientious delicacy. . . .

The doom of Ham has been branded on the form and features of his African descendants. The hand of fate has united his color and his destiny. Many cannot separate what God hath joined. . . .

Permit me now for a moment to look into the causes of this vast and dangerous excitement; for it is intimately connected with the true merits of this important question. I am not disposed to attribute it to any peculiar feelings of hostility entertained by the North against the South, arising from position merely. It is indeed natural that a people not owning slaves should entertain a strong aversion to domestic servitude.

It is natural that the descendants of the Puritans, without any deep investigation of the subject, should have an instinctive hostility to slavery in every shape. . . .

But other causes are at work. This excitement belongs to the spirit of the age. Every close observer must perceive that we are approaching, if we have not already reached, a new era in civilization. The man of the nineteenth century is not the man of the seventeenth, and widely different from him of the eighteenth. Within the last sixty years there have been greater changes—not on the face of the earth, but in the history of civilized man—than has taken place before perhaps since the reign of Charlemagne. . . .

During the period of this mighty change, the great struggle between the rulers and the ruled has been carried on with corresponding vigor; through the thousand channels which genius has opened, wealth has flown in to aid it in its contest with the strong arm of power. The two combined, finding themselves still unable to cope with the time-hardened strength of hereditary government, and eager, impatient, almost frenzied, to achieve its conquest, have called in to their assistance another ally—*the people*: not the “people,” as we have hitherto been accustomed in this country to define that term, but the MOB—the SANS-CULOTTES. Proclaiming as their watchword that immortal but now prostituted sentiment, “that all men are both free and equal,” they have rallied to their standard the ignorant, uneducated, semi-barbarous mass which swarms and starves upon the face of Europe! Unnatural and debasing union! Hereditary institutions are gone. Already have the nobility of France been overthrown. Their days are numbered in the British empire. Let them go. I am not their advocate. What next? *Confiscation has begun!* The result is as obvious as if it were written on the wall. The hounds of Acteon turned upon their master. Genius and wealth, stimulated by “an ambition that o’erleaps itself,” have called these spirits from the vasty deep; they will down no more. The spoils of victory are theirs, and they will gorge and batten on them.

In this country we have no hereditary institutions to attract the first fury of this tempest, which is also brewing here; for the electric fluid has crossed the ocean, and the elements denote that it is expanding over the northern arch of our horizon. The question of emancipation, which in Europe is only a collateral issue—a mere ramification of the great controversy between hereditary power and ultimate agrarianism—has become with us the first and most important question; partly because the levellers here have not yet felt the heavy pressure of political oppression, and partly because they have regarded our institutions of slavery as most assimilated to an aristocracy. In this they are right. I accept the term. *It is a government of the best.* Combining all the advantages, and possessing but few of the disadvantages, of the aristocracy of the old world—without fostering to an unwarrantable extent the pride, the exclusiveness, the selfishness, the thirst for sway, the contempt for the rights of others, which distinguish the nobility of Europe—it gives us their education, their polish, their munificence, their high honor, their undaunted spirit. Slavery does indeed create an aristocracy—an aristocracy of talents, of virtue, of generosity and courage. In a slave country *every freeman* is an aristocrat. Be he rich or poor, if he does not possess a single slave, he has been born to all the natural advantages of the society in which he is placed, and all its honors lie open before him, inviting his genius and industry. Sir, I do firmly believe that domestic slavery, regulated as ours is, produces the highest toned, the purest, best organization of society that has ever existed on the face of the earth. . . .

9. A Christian Justifies Slavery, 1845

The issue now before us regards the essential moral character of slavery; and on such a question I am strongly disposed to pass by all ethical and metaphysical dissertation, and appeal at one to the only standard of right and wrong which can prove decisive. For my own part, I am heartily sick and weary of the controversies and debates waged and waging on every side, in which each party is contending, not for truth, but victory, and which have effected just nothing, for the want of some arbiter recognised by all, and whose decree shall be final and infallible. Now such an umpire we have. Whatever importance others may attach to the deductions of human reasoning, and thus impiously array against the Scriptures those “oppositions of science falsely so called,” which the Apostle terms “profane and vain babblings,” you and I have long since put on our shields one motto—“Let God be true and every man a liar.” . . .

Now, in order to clear away rubbish, and arrive at once at the point, let me remind you that it is simply the essential character of slavery which we are discussing; and that slavery is a term whose meaning can be easily and accurately defined. Slavery is bondage. It is (to give Paley’s idea in other language) the condition of one to whose service another has a right, without the consent or contract of the servant. . . .

Is it necessarily a crime in the sight of God to control or curtail the natural personal liberty of a human being? A question admitting no debate at all.

It will not be disputed that government is the ordinance of God. But government is restraint; the very idea of government includes an abridgment of that personal freedom which a savage has in the forest, and a modification of it into political freedom, or civil rights and privileges.

Is it, then, necessarily a crime for a government to discriminate between those whom it controls, in the distribution of civil privileges and political liberty? It would surely be preposterous to affirm this. Every government has necessarily a right to pass laws indispensable to its existence; and it has a right, also, to establish those regulations which shall best promote the good of the whole population. Whether any particular enactments be necessary, and whether they do secure the greatest good, are points as to which error may be committed, but as to which each government is the judge; and if it acts uprightly, with all the lights possessed, there is no crime. We boast of our liberties, and are forever quoting the words of the Declaration of Independence; yet in this country it has been deemed most for the good of the whole, that one half of the citizens (and I believe by far the noblest, purest, and best half) should be disfranchised of a great many civil rights. This is true, also, of all citizens until they reach an age wholly conventional,—viz. twenty-one. Is this a sin? Will it be urged that all are born free and equal, and that it is wicked to violate the indefeasible rights of women and minors? The day is coming, I venture to predict, when our regenerators will utter such frantic arguments; for they drive on, unrecking and unheeding alike the plainest dictates of reason and experience, and the stern lessons of the French Revolution, and the warning voice which spoke in such

fearful accents amid the havoc and butchery and desolation of St. Domingo. But no good citizen considers the inequalities existing in these States criminal. . . .

As soon as slavery is mentioned at the North, there is conjured up, in the minds of many persons, I know not what confused, revolting combination, and heart-rending spectacle, of chains, and whips, and cruelty, and crime, and wretchedness. But, I repeat it, even at the peril of tediousness, that necessarily and essentially—(and in a multitude of instances, practically and actually)—slavery is nothing more than the condition of one who is deprived of political power, and does service,—without his contract and consent, it is true, but yet it may be, cheerfully and happily, and for a compensation reasonable and certain, paid in modes of return best for the slave himself. With what is strictly physical liberty, the master interferes no more, in such cases, than you do with a hired servant. The work assigned is confessedly very light—scarcely one half of that performed by a white laborer with you. When that is performed, the slaves (to use an expression common with them) are “their own masters.” And if you ever allow us the pleasure of seeing you at the South, you will find slaves tilling land for themselves; working as mechanics for themselves, and selling various articles of merchandise for themselves; and when you inquire of them some explanation, they will speak of their rights, and their property, with as clear a sense of what is due to them, and as much confidence, as they could if free; and tell you (to use another of their phrases) that they do all this “in their own time.” . . .

Having described the condition of a slave, I ought now to advert to the obligations of the master; but I have not space, nor is it requisite. Let me only say, (and with the most solemn earnestness, for God forbid I should ever utter a word which may perpetuate cruelty and sin,) that the right of the master not only does not give him any such license of wholesale oppression and wrong as you suppose, but really places him under the deepest corresponding obligations to promote the interest, temporal and eternal, of his slaves. And though we have all been “verily guilty concerning our brethren” who are dependent on us, yet I trust the South is becoming every day more alive to its responsibility. Already much has been effected; and, as a class, I believe our slaves to be now better compensated, and, in moral, intellectual, and religious condition, superior to most operatives in Europe. From parliamentary reports, it appears that in Ireland three millions and a half of people live in mud hovels, having one room, and without chimney or window. In England and Wales there are three millions of people without any pastoral provision. In London itself the statistics of misery and vice are appalling. On one occasion, said a speaker in Exeter Hall, four families occupied one small room, each hiring a corner; and in one of these corners there was a corpse lately dead, and four men using it as a table to play cards upon. And if this be so in Great Britain, need I speak of Spain and Russia, or attest what I myself have seen of ignorance and superstition and degradation in Italy? We are far, however, from having acquitted ourselves of our duty; and I do not wish to palliate, much less defend by recrimination, the unfaithfulness of the South to the sacred trust imposed upon us. . . .

The natural descendants of Abraham were holders of slaves, and God took them into special relation to himself. “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel;” and he instituted regulations for their government, into which he expressly incorporated a permission to buy and hold slaves. These institutes not only recognise slavery as lawful, but contain very minute directions. It is

not necessary for me to argue this point, as it is conceded by you. Slaves were held by the priests. "A sojourner of a priest, or an hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing. But if the priest buy any soul with his money, he shall eat of it, and he that is born in his house, they shall eat of it." (Lev. xxii. 10, 11). They might be bought of the Canaanites around, or of strangers living among the Hebrews. "Both thy bondmen, and they bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land; and they shall be your possession." (Lev. xxv.) They were regarded as property, and were called "money," "possession:" "If a man smite his servant or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money." (Exod. xxi. 20, 21.) They might be sold. This is implied in the term "money;" but it is plainly taken for granted: "Thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her." (Deut. xxi. 14.) See also Exod. xxi. 7, 8. "And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. If she pleases not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her to a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her." The slavery thus expressly sanctioned was hereditary and perpetual: "Ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession. They shall be your bondmen forever." (Lev. xxv.) Lastly, Hebrews, if bought, were to be treated, not as slaves, but as hired servants, and to go free at the year of jubilee. "If thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant; but as an hired servant and as a sojourner shall he be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee: and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his father shall he return." (Lev. xxv. 29.) If during the Hebrew's time of service he married a slave, and had children, the wife and children were not set at liberty with him. If he consented, he might become a slave for life: "If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges: he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." (Exod. xxi. 2-6.)

Such are some parts of the Mosaic institution. Let me add, also, that the decalogue twice recognises slavery, and forbids one Israelite to covet the man-servant or maid-servant of another. And, now, how does all this appear if your assumption be for a moment tenable, that slavery is as great a crime as can be committed? Suppose these regulations had thus sanctioned piracy, or idolatry, would they ever have commanded the faith of the world as divine? How conclusive this that slavery is not among crimes in the estimation of mankind, and according to the immutable and eternal principles of morality! . . .

The New Testament is not silent as to slavery; it recognises the relation, and commands slaves to obey their masters; and what I now affirm is this, that, when we consider the previous permission by the Old Testament, such commands to slaves are not only a *suppressio veri*, but a *suggestio falsi*—not only a suppression of the truth, but a suggestion of what is false—if slavery be a sin of appalling magnitude. Let it be borne in mind that the previous sanction had been both by God's conduct and express precept, and demanded, therefore, a countervailing revelation of no equivocal sort. Yet, not only is no condemnation uttered, but slaves are addressed as such, and required to obey. . . .

You affirm . . . that although the apostles did not condemn slavery by express precept, they did so by the inculcation of truths that must abolish slavery. As to which allegation, occupying the ground I now do, it would be quite enough for me to reply, that no matter what truths the apostles taught, if they received slaveholders into the churches, and pronounced them "*faithful and beloved*," they put to silence the charge that slaveholding is always and everywhere a sin.

If you had said that the gospel, wherever received, at once eradicated the Roman system of slavery, and made the relation "a very different thing;" and if you had added, that everywhere the gospel requires of a master the moral and intellectual improvement of his slaves; I at least should have had no controversy with you. Then, too, while Christians at the South are enjoined to perform their solemn duty, the good and the wise through the Union might consult in the spirit of a prospective and far-seeing philanthropy, as to the designs of God for the African race. But the proposition defended by you has no connection with all this. Slavery is averred by you to be always; and every moment, a sin of appalling magnitude. . . .

Slavery may be a sin; and may be rendered so by the manner in which the present master obtained his power, or by the abuse of that power, or by the means employed to perpetuate that power. But supposing there is no sin (as there is manifestly none) in being the heir or legatee of this power, then the use of it may be most virtuous; as in the bequests mentioned in my third letter; and in all cases where slaves are unprepared for liberty, and the master's authority is exercised for their truest benefit, temporal and eternal.

10. Henry Highland Garnet Calls for Slaves to Resist, 1843

Two hundred and twenty-seven years ago, the first of our injured race were brought to the shores of America. They came not with glad spirits to select their homes in the New World. They came not with their own consent, to find an unmolested enjoyment of the blessings of this fruitful soil. The first dealings they had with men calling themselves Christians, exhibited to them the worst features of corrupt and sordid hearts; and convinced them that no cruelty is too great, no villainy and no robbery too abhorrent for even enlightened men to perform, when influenced by avarice and lust. Neither did they come flying upon the wings of Liberty, to a land of freedom.

From Henry Highland Garnet, *An Address to the Slaves of the United States* (1843), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2937t.html> (accessed August 6, 2006).

⌘ E S S A Y S

Collectively, the abolitionists' appeals amounted to one of the most searing social indictments in all U.S. history. And in attacking slavery, the abolitionists also inevitably described what they hoped the nation would become. As the following essays make clear, antislavery and abolitionism very quickly raised enormous questions about gender, labor, autonomy, God, and equality that had no simple answers in the antebellum period—or even today. In the first essay, Julie Roy Jeffrey of Goucher College describes how women, who provided the backbone of the abolitionist movement, quickly moved beyond antislavery efforts that were private or domestic in nature to routinely engage in activities that took them into the *public* sphere. In the second essay, Eugene Genovese views the opposite side of the coin—proslavery thought—through the lenses of Christianity and economic theory. By the 1840s, he argues, a southern school of moral philosophy emerged to defend slavery on essentially religious, scriptural grounds (as opposed to earlier attempts to use political and economic arguments to buttress the institution). Far from being a new, exotic southern aberration, in 1830 proslavery arguments had a long pedigree in America on both sides of the Mason Dixon line. After 1830, slavery's advocates produced an increasingly coherent secular and religious defense of an entire way of life. Was this proslavery ideology merely a backward, guilt-ridden mania, running against the American grain, as some scholars have argued?

Northern Women and Abolition

JULIE ROY JEFFREY

In the early days of organized antislavery, a letter from the London Female Antislavery Society to the recently established Female Antislavery Society in Reading, Massachusetts, appeared in the *Liberator*. In the letter, the London society encouraged the Reading association to persevere in its work for immediate emancipation, no matter what obstacles it encountered. Warning their American counterparts to ignore “the plausible reasonings of any who try to turn you aside,” the English women explained that commitment to the antislavery cause did not demand any departures “from that propriety which allots to a sex its peculiar sphere of usefulness.” This reassurance implied a restricted role for antislavery women focused on stirring up “the more active efforts of male connection” and reading, conversing, and praying within the family circle.

Initially, Garrison and other male leaders shared similar notions of what women might do to aid the struggle against slavery. As recent scholarship has amply demonstrated, however, most middle-class white and black women abolitionists gradually moved beyond antislavery efforts that were private and domestic in nature (like prayer or support for the free produce movement). Because they believed that abolitionism was not only a moral question but also a public issue, women routinely engaged in activities that took them into the public arena. As the organizers of the Boston Fair, which attracted large crowds every year, pointed out, their main objective was “to keep the subject [of immediate emancipation] before the public eye,

From Julie Roy Jeffrey, “Permeable Boundaries: Abolitionist Women and Separate Spheres,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 21 (2002), pp. 79–93. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pennsylvania Press.

than live to be slaves. It is impossible like the children of Israel, to make a grand exodus from the land of bondage. The Pharaohs are on both sides of the blood-red waters! You cannot move *en masse*, to the dominions of the British Queen—nor can you pass through Florida and overrun Texas, and at last find peace in Mexico. The propagators of American slavery are spending their blood and treasure, that they may plant the black flag in the heart of Mexico and riot in the halls of the Montezumas. In the language of the Rev. Robert Hall, when addressing the volunteers of Bristol, who were rushing forth to repel the invasion of Napoleon, who threatened to lay waste the fair homes of England, "Religion is too much interested in your behalf, not to shed over you her most gracious influences."

You will not be compelled to spend much time in order to become injured to hardships. From the first moment that you breathed the air of heaven, you have been accustomed to nothing else but hardships. The heroes of the American Revolution were never put upon harder fare than a peck of corn and a few herrings per week. You have not become enervated by the luxuries of life. Your sternest energies have been beaten out upon the anvil of severe trial. Slavery has done this, to make you subservient, to its own purposes; but it has done more than this, it has prepared you for any emergency. If you receive good treatment, it is what you could hardly expect; if you meet with pain, sorrow, and even death, these are the common lot of slaves.

Fellow men! Patient sufferers! behold your dearest rights crushed to the earth! See your sons murdered, and your wives, mothers and sisters doomed to prostitution. In the name of the merciful God, and by all that life is worth, let it no longer be a debatable question whether it is better to choose *Liberty or death* . . .

Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. *Rather die freemen than live to be slaves.* Remember that you are FOUR MILLIONS!

It is in your power so to torment the God-cursed slaveholders that they will be glad to let you go free. If the scale was turned, and black men were the masters and white men the slaves, every destructive agent and element would be employed to lay the oppressor low. Danger and death would hang over their heads day and night. Yes, the tyrants would meet with plagues more terrible than those of Pharaoh. But you are a patient people. You act as though, you were made for the special use of these devils. You act as though your daughters were born to pamper the lusts of your masters and overseers. And worse than all, you tamely submit while your lords tear your wives from your embraces and defile them before your eyes. In the name of God, we ask, are you men? Where is the blood of your fathers? Has it all run out of your veins? Awake, awake; millions of voices are calling you! Your dead fathers speak to you from their graves. Heaven, as with a voice of thunder, calls on you to arise from the dust.

Let your motto be resistance! *resistance!* RESISTANCE! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. What kind of resistance you had better make, you must decide by the circumstances that surround you, and according to the suggestion of expediency. Brethren, adieu! Trust in the living God. Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are FOUR MILLIONS.

and by every innocent expedient to promote perpetual discussion." Sharing this perception of the necessity of involving themselves in the public sphere, the non-Garrisonian Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle of Dover, New Hampshire, decided in 1857 to promote public discussion of national questions by organizing "a meeting of the citizens of Dover in behalf of Kansas."

Although the records of the Sewing Circle do not reveal whether any Dover residents questioned the legitimacy of women calling a town meeting, many antislavery activities attracted furious responses from critics who claimed that women were out of their sphere. Whether responding to criticism or reflecting on the meaning of their commitment, abolitionist women proved adept at exploiting, subverting, and contesting conservative definitions of appropriate female behavior. Even when they did not agree among themselves, antislavery women blurred distinctions between private and public, expanded the parameters of "woman's sphere," and suggested alternative meanings for gender norms.

The activities and written records of abolitionist women are a useful reminder of the nature of social, cultural, and economic changes in the antebellum period. Just as class divisions were imprecise, and the membership and meaning of the middle class were not yet set, notions of gender were in the process of construction. In a fluid society, the meaning of key concepts like propriety and female decorum were contested. Whether they eventually subscribed to women's rights or not, many abolitionist women (and men) found themselves engaged in a definitional struggle that the notion of distinct spheres obscures.

The struggle was one that took place on a nonverbal as well as verbal level. James Vernon and others have demonstrated the importance of analyzing politics from a cultural perspective. This approach broadens the understanding of political activity and illuminates political culture as an "arena of struggle" between groups, each with its own definition of politics and participation. In this area, material objects as well as the use of time and space offer fruitful evidence for understanding political action. . . .

Antislavery women of all persuasions, [for example,] both black and white, held antislavery fairs in small and large communities. In 1840, the Bangor (Maine) Female Anti-Slavery Society, fully aware of the "great responsibility" of such an undertaking, decided to hold its first fair in late August. From the outset, fair organizers proceeded to make clear their intention of ensuring the fair would be a great public and commercial event. Because Bangor was a small city and the society wanted to get as large a crowd as possible, the women selected a date that coincided with special events at the Bangor Seminary. The Bangor Sewing Circle, formed the previous year to make money for the society, was hard at work creating items to sell at the fair. Notices in the Maine antislavery paper, the *Advocate of Freedom*, invited women outside of the city to cooperate with the fair. Aware of the tastes of the intended market, the Bangor society called for "articles of *substantial* utility in the family, both food and clothing." Country women were asked to contribute butter and cheese to the fair as well as a hundred weight of maple syrup.

Although the Reverend Thurston asked for heaven's blessing for the venture on the first evening, the fair was an unabashedly commercial venture that was intended to make money. The women designed a marketplace that put visitors into a visually arresting environment where consumption was invited. At the center of the hall hung

a vast chandelier of evergreens, covered with lamps. In the evening, the "completely illuminated" hall was dazzlingly brilliant, a dramatic contrast to the dimly lit interior spaces with which visitors were familiar. Festoons of pungent greens and colorful flowers decorated the hall. Beautiful embroideries, curtains, and paintings created a rich and sensuous atmosphere quite different from the everyday world and its considerations. The laden refreshment table and the "great variety" of goods displayed around the hall tempted the visitor to eat, drink, and purchase what the fair so attractively offered. Despite the "splendid . . . scene," however, fair organizers shrewdly had decided to offer only those goods that were both affordable and appealing to Maine buyers. Unlike the big Boston Fair, "scarcely an article of mere fancy" was "to be seen." Rather items combining "taste" with "utility" were offered at "a fair value," (or what one woman working for an 1857 fair called "a price to suit the times").

The carefully planned venture resulted in a financial success that exceeded expectations. Given the "scarcity of money" in Maine and the "unpopularity" of anti-slavery, the total receipts of \$500 were "unparalleled." But the fair was not just a public fundraiser but a complex event with many purposes and levels of meaning. Holding a fair, for example, allowed the Bangor Female Anti-Slavery Society to recruit women to antislavery and to solidify the ties of both newcomers and old hands to the movement. This early appeal for donated goods helped to secure the necessary articles to sell but also was a way of providing women with antislavery sympathies a purpose and perhaps, if they worked in groups, to heighten their zeal and give some basic instruction on abolitionism. As the Bangor Sewing Society explained when it established itself, "By more frequent meeting together a deeper interest has been awakened and sustained,—and it has brought many in contact with Anti-Slavery principles who might not otherwise have become interested."

The fair also provided a way for the women to spread the antislavery message and to stimulate the discussion of a political question in a public setting. Vernon suggests that we "cannot underestimate the scale and intensity of the politics of sight, or the power these forms of communication afforded to the individuals who used them." Descriptions of the fair make clear that it was an example of the politics of sight. Its careful visual construction was designed to impress visitors whether they were abolitionists or casual shoppers. The first image assaulted the emotions. As soon as visitors ventured into the hall, they confronted a print of a kneeling slave. His imploring stance cried out for help. When visitors lifted their eyes to the capacious arch over the slave's head they saw the fundamental demand spelled out in large letters made from evergreen branches: "LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE." Elsewhere in the hall other mottoes made from evergreen boughs stated essential abolitionists goals. "EMANCIPATION" proclaimed one arrangement of greens while another reminded those attending the fair that immediate emancipation was not just a political goal but one that God himself demanded: "Let my people go."

If there was any uncertainty about these women's claim to a political voice, articles appearing in the *Advocate for Freedom* after the fair revealed their commitment to use that voice. The women donated \$200 to the state society and sent \$30 to schools for escaped slaves in Canada. The remaining \$270 was reserved for the society's own projects. Several months after the fair, the Bangor Female Antislavery Society issued a letter to all the Ladies of the State outlining its ambitious plan for a massive petition drive. While paying lip service to the notion that women were happy

to avoid the “turmoil and strife” involved in legislation, the society announced that its members could not “tamely submit” to the “oppressive law” that tabled petitions sent to Congress. The society intended to secure the signatures of every woman in the state over the age of fourteen on its petition for the repeal of the nefarious law. The decision to mobilize all the state’s women was both an effort to engage in pressure politics and to do grassroots political education on a large scale. As the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the organization representing the evangelical (and often labeled conservative) wing of the antislavery movement in the 1840s and 1850s explained, petitioning kept abolitionism alive. A successful petition drive demanded that the collectors of signatures speak with every person in his or her district. He or she “answers objections, removes prejudices, awakens an interest, and perhaps leaves a tract or newspaper which will be as seed sown.” . . .

The foundation for women’s intellectual efforts to carve out their own understanding of gender was rooted in their understanding of sin and female duty. It is important to remember that around these words a contentious debate raged. Was slavery a sin against God? Was a woman who took up the abolitionist cause sinning, especially if her clergyman told her to desist? Did the goal of immediate emancipation have anything to do with female duty at all? If female duty was a moral duty, was it limited to worldly involvement in some causes but not others?

Even though such questions might elicit a wide range of responses, abolitionist women’s conviction that slavery was a “giant sin” and “the *cause* of God” shaped their definition of duty. No matter what anyone might say, as Mary Clark insisted, “There is One that is higher than the highest human authority—in obedience to Him we shall be safe.” If a woman listened to her conscience and “Divine Truth” rather than false voices, she would discover that truth and abolitionism were one and the same thing. The distinction the Lynn Female Anti-Slavery Society made between full duty and partial duty made it clear that full duty carried with it the obligation of action rather than attention to any boundaries set by flawed public opinion. The real sins, women insisted, were passivity and indifference.

The Proslavery Argument

EUGENE D. GENOVESE

The slaveholders found themselves enmeshed in a world market at the center of which lay a system of free labor, a developing liberal polity, and a system of moral values based upon the principle of each man’s property in himself. In the South the need to defend slavery drove the intellectuals from attempts at accommodation with this transatlantic world view to a desperate effort to project an alternative world view at once reactionary and new. . . .

Southern political economists foresaw the demise of slavery. Thus, even the most theoretically advanced—Thomas R. Dew, Jacob Cardozo, and especially George Tucker—had increasing difficulty in applying their work to the specific conditions

From Eugene D. Genovese, “Religious and Economic Thought in the Proslavery Argument,” in *Essays in Economic and Business History*, 15 (1997), pp. 1–9. Reprinted by permission of the author.

of their own society, at least on terms the majority of their fellow Southerners could accept. On the one hand, they understood economic development to require a market in labor-power; on the other hand, they feared that the preservation of a civilized social order required the perpetuation of slavery. During the 1840s and 1850s, when the proslavery argument reached high tide, those who defended slavery invoked political economy, as Senator James H. Hammond of South Carolina did in his famous "Cotton Is King" speech, to try to prove that the world economy depended upon slave-produced staples. But they could not effectively invoke political economy to sustain the moral claims of slavery. By the late 1840s the influence of southern political economists was declining. They continued to publish and command respect, but less for their economic arguments than for their expositions of a conservative world view and an attendant socio-political defense of slavery. They never did work out an economic defense of slavery that could support the larger—and politically decisive—moral defense.

George Tucker's attitude toward slavery is especially revealing, for he regarded slavery as an obstacle to economic development and wished it gone. His economic analysis provided no comfort to those who had to repel the mounting moral and political assault of the abolitionist and who were moving to high ground in defense of their way of life. And even the firmly proslavery Cardozo and Dew doubted that slavery could survive the relentless development of international capitalism. For the slaveholders, Tucker's argument led nowhere. Planters, journalists, and politicians understood that it implied the "assisted suicide" of the slaveholding class.

Southern political economists could produce ringing endorsements of slavery as an efficient labor system under specific conditions, but they could offer little hope for its prospects in an industrializing world. Accordingly, by the 1840s the defense of slavery was passing into the hands of moral and social philosophers, theologians, political scientists, and "sociologists" (as some were beginning to call themselves).

The slowly developing recognition that political economy offered inadequate support for slavery crystallized in the 1850s. Tucker and Cardozo expected economic development to lead to emancipation in one form or another but with dreadful consequences for the emancipated. Paul Conkin, analyzing Tucker's view that economic development would eventually eliminate slavery by driving the price of free labor down to rock bottom, observes, "Surely, no one ever offered a gloomier reason for eventual emancipation."

Most proslavery theorists did not challenge the law of diminishing returns, the iron law of wages, and Malthusian population theory, but neither did they expect the laboring classes to pass into immiseration without violent uprisings that would lead to anarchy and, ultimately, to military despotism. For them, the problem was to create a society in which the inexorable laws of the market would operate within socially safe limits. . . .

Henry Hughes of Mississippi, whose *Treatise on Sociology* appeared in 1854 . . . redefined political economy as the union of two sciences, the one concerned with human existence and the other with its security. The first end of society, he insisted "is the existence of all." The second is "the progress of all." Society must assure everyone of "personal subsistence and personal security." He defined the economic system as "the organ of subsistence" and the political system "as the organ of security." The best form of society in which to realize the existence and progress of all

"is that in which the societary power is perfectly associated, perfectly adapted, and perfectly regulated." Thus Hughes demanded that the laboring classes, white as well as black, be "warranted" and thereby guaranteed a living. "Everything," he thundered, "ought to be stopped until this is done."

By the 1840s, a southern school of moral philosophy and sociology had emerged to defend slavery on higher ground than that offered by political economy. And that higher ground was essentially religious—formulated primarily by theologians and grounded in Scripture. The theologians accepted the laws of political economy as descriptive of the workings of a market economy, but they denied that the market should be allowed to dominate a Christian society.

The divines provided the scriptural and moral underpinnings for the doctrine that declared personal servitude the natural and proper condition of all labor regardless of race. On this matter, as on the interpretation of the federal Constitution, the southern divines split decisively with their northern counterparts on the fundamentals of Christian theology. For they stood firmly on the Word, insisting that the Holy Spirit must be understood as objectively manifested in the Bible. They thereby rejected the reduction of the Holy Spirit to the subjective spirit of everyman—to a matter of individual conscience and therefore of personal opinion. In so doing, they held firm for a Christian orthodoxy that was in headlong retreat in the northern churches and, indeed, in the larger transatlantic Christian world. And here I must deliver some real bad news and ask that you not shoot the messenger. In the critical struggle over biblical exegesis—and, in a deeply religious country, biblical exegesis was, in fact, politically critical—the slaveholders mopped up the abolitionists on the question of whether the Bible sanctioned slavery. There was, however, one great problem with the scriptural defense of slavery, as Lincoln and many other antislavery men saw. In a sense, it said too much, for the Bible did not sanction racial slavery; it sanctioned slavery *per se*—slavery regardless of race.

Now it was one thing to argue that the Bible sanctioned slavery among other social relations. It was quite another to advocate slavery as the necessary and proper condition of labor. The first rendered the second theologically permissible, but it did not constitute an endorsement of it as social policy. Thus, the divines had to move from theology to history, political economy, and moral and social philosophy—much as the moral and social philosophers had to move to theology to justify their proposed solution of the Social Question through the reenslavement of the laboring classes. Both groups, in short, refused to separate religion from society either in thought or in action.

Led by the Presbyterians, the southern divines were at home with history and political economy. They constituted a disproportionately large portion of the South's leading educators, and they exercised a determining influence over the entire educational system. They dominated the academies and old field schools, and of course the Sabbath schools, which assumed much of the responsibility for the education for the yeomanry. And they dominated the colleges, secular as well as denominational. Ministers and religiously committed laymen occupied almost all of the chairs of history, political economy, and moral philosophy. The divines, in reading history and political economy, saw the free-labor system as heading into either a Malthusian crisis of fearful proportions or at least into a slow descent into the immiseration of the laboring classes. Their study of history taught them that slavery and personal

servitude in one form or another have been ubiquitous in world history, and they agreed that free labor, not slavery, was a "peculiar" institution of recent origin and with doubtful prospects. As students of the French Revolution and the great social struggles that were wracking Europe and beginning to wrack the North, they concluded that the laboring classes would rise in massive insurrections. The result could only be anarchy, followed by a Caesarism that would destroy liberty while offering protection and succor to the laborers to whom it would make every kind of demagogic appeal. The divines were not surprised when the Parisian workers rose in insurrection against the new bourgeois republic during the terrible June Days of 1848. But note: Their critique focused on social relations, not economic policy. They attacked the free-labor system as a revolutionary and self-revolutionizing force that promoted radical egalitarianism and thereby assaulted social order—assaulted family life, political and social hierarchy, and the very principle of legitimate authority. The slaveholders' attack on liberal theology proceeded apace with their attack on liberal social and political theory, for, quite properly, they understood it as all of a piece.

The advanced proslavery argument was not invented by George Fitzhugh and Henry Hughes in the 1850s. It had been building for decades. Let me here settle for the Baptists. In 1802 the Reverend Henry Holcombe of Savannah denounced egalitarianism in general and Tom Paine's effort to inflame the poor with class hatred for their betters. In the early 1820s the Reverend Dr. Richard Furman, in his celebrated *Exposition of the Views of the Baptists*, noted that a considerable part of mankind always has been and always would be in de jure or de facto slavery. In the wake of the Fall, he wrote, "a considerable part of the human race, whether they bear openly the character of slaves or are reputed free men, will continue in such circumstances, with mere shades of variation, while the world continues." In 1837, the Reverend Gerald Capers of Macon, Georgia, drew especially on Thomas Roderick Dew to insist that two thirds of mankind have always labored for the rest. Our slaves, he wrote, are much better off than the "hired servants of the abolitionists."

In 1843 the Reverend William C. Richards, a gifted editor of both Baptist and secular journals, harshly reviewed Charles Dickens' *American Notes*, arguing that southern slavery was immeasurably more humane than British wage-slavery. In 1845, Richard Fuller cited the British parliamentary reports on the three and a half million Irishmen who lived in one-room mud hovels without chimneys or windows, while for London, "the statistics of misery and vice are appalling." A year later, the Alabama Baptist, an influential denominational journal, quoted a northern abolitionist as charging that southern Baptists endorsed the sentiments of George McDuffie, who said, "Slavery is the best possible relation between the employer and the laborer." The editor of the Alabama Baptist replied: "THIS IS EXACTLY OUR POSITION."

In endorsing slavery as the natural and proper condition of labor, the country preachers were led by such learned theologians as James Henley Thornwell, George Armstrong, and Robert L. Dabney, and in their pulpits and schoolhouses, they passed that teaching on to their flock. By the late 1840s, the leading Presbyterian clergymen and laymen were unambiguously asserting, in the pages of the influential *Southern Presbyterian Review* and elsewhere, that the frightful ills that were threatening church and state had their origin in the free-labor system and the social atomization

to which it led. Thornwell, the intellectual leader of the southern churches, spoke plainly on the eve of secession: "That non-slaveholding states will eventually have to organize labour, and to introduce something so like to slavery that it will be impossible to discriminate between them, or else to suffer from the most violent and disastrous insurrections against the system which perpetuates their misery, seems to be as certain as the tendencies in the laws of capital and population to produce the extremes of poverty and wealth." The outstanding theologians and church leaders in virtually every denomination were speaking much in the manner of Thornwell.

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