**Morality, War, and Slavery**

**Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.**

THE CIVIL WAR was our great national trauma. A savage fraternal conflict, it released deep sentiments of guilt and remorse - sentiments which have reverberated though our history and our literature ever since. Literature in the end came to terms with these sentiments by yielding to the South in fantasy the victory it had been denied in fact; this tendency culminated on the popular level in Gone with the Wind and on the highbrow level in the Nashville cult of agrarianism. But history, a less malleable medium, was constricted by the intractable fact that the war had taken place, and by the related assumption that it was, in William H. Seward's phrase an "irrepressible conflict," and hence a justified one.

As short a time ago as 1937, for example, even Professor James G. Randall described himself as the leader of a triumphant new school of self-styled "revisionists." The publication of two vigorous books by Professor Avery Craven - The Repressible Conflict (1939) and The Coming of the Civil War (1942) - and the appearance of Professor Randall's own notable volumes on Lincoln - Lincoln the President: Springfield to Gettysburg (1942), Lincoln and the South (1946), and Lincoln the Liberal Statesman (1947) - brought about a profound reversal of the professional historian's attitude toward the Civil War. Scholars now denied the traditional assumption of the inevitability of the war and boldly advanced the thesis that a "blundering generation" has transformed a "suppressible conflict" into a "needless war."

The swift triumph of revisionism came about with very little resistance or even expressed reservations on the part of the profession. This new interpretation, however, surely deserves closer examination.

The revisionist case, as expounded by Professor Randall, has three main premises.

First the Civil War was caused by the irresponsible emotionlization of politics far out of proportion to the real problems involved. The war, as Randall put it, was not caused by cultural economic rivalries, nor by sectional differences; these all existed, but it was "stupid," as he declared, to think that they required war as a solution. After all, Randall pointed out, agrarian and industrial interest had been in conflict under Coolidge and Hoover; yet no war resulted. "In Illinois," he added, "major controversies between downstate and metropolis have stopped short of war."

Nor was the slavery the cause. The issues arising over slavery were in Randall's judgment "highly artificial, almost fabricated. …They produced quarrels out of things that would have settled themselves were it not for political agitation." Slavery, he observed, was in any case a much overrated problem. It is "perfectly clear," he wrote, "that slavery played a rather minor part in the life of the South and of the Negro."

What then did Randall believe was the cause of war? "If one word or phrase were selected to account for the war," wrote Randall, "it would have to be such a word as fanaticism misunderstanding, misrepresentation, or perhaps politics." He described the growing sense of sectional differences as "an artificial creation of inflamed minds." The "molders of public opinion steadily created the fiction of two distinct peoples." As a result, "misunderstanding and emotion led a people into bloody war."

If uncontrolled emotionalism and fanaticism caused the war, how did they get out of hand? Who whipped up the "whipped-up crisis"? Thus the second revisionist thesis:

2) The sectional friction was permitted to develop into needless war by the inexcusable failure of political leadership in the 1850s. "It is difficult to achieve a full realization of how Lincoln's generation stumbled into a ghastly war," wrote Randall.” It was, in short, a "blundering generation."

It was the politicians, he said, who systematically sacrificed peace to their pursuit of power. Calhoun and Adams, "seeking political advantage," mixed up slavery and expansion; Wilmot introduced his "trouble-making Proviso as part of the political game;" and, of course, the repeal clause in the Kansas-Nebraska Act. "These uncalled-for moves and this irresponsible leadership," concluded Randall, blew up a "crack-pot" crusade into a national conflict.

Finally, the third revisionists thesis:

3) The slavery problem could have been solved without war. For, even if slavery were as unimportant as the revisionists have insisted, they would presumably admit that it constituted the real sticking-point in the relations between the sections. They must show therefore that there were policies with which a non-blundering generation could have resolved the slavery crisis and averted war; and that these policies were so obvious that the failure to adopt them indicated blundering and stupidity of a peculiarly irresponsible nature. If no such policies could be produced even by hindsight, then it would seem excessive to condemn the politicians of the fifties for failing to discover them at the time.

The revisionist have shown only a most vague and sporadic awareness of this problem. In fact, neither Randall nor his fellow revisionists have shown in any way that slavery might have been eliminated without war.

In view of this reticence on a point so crucial to the revisionist argument, it is necessary to reconstruct the possibilities that might lie in the back of revisionism. Clearly there could only be two "solutions" to the slavery problem: the preservation of slavery, or its abolition, and certainly, the revisionists would not regard the preservation of slavery as a possible solution.

If, then, revisionism has rested on the assumption that the nonviolent abolition of slavery was possible, such abolition could conceivably have come about though internal reform in the South with economic exhaustion of the slavery system, or through some government project for gradual and compensated emancipation. Let us examine these possibilities.

1) The internal reform arguments: The South, the revisionists have suggested, might have endued the slavery system if left to its own devices; only the abolitionists spoiled everything by letting loose a hysteria which caused the southern ranks to close in self-defense, and thus, the chance to eliminate slavery was lost. The shrill senseless emotionalism of Garrison and his ilk prevented emancipation from occurring in the South.

This revisionist argument would have been more convincing if the decades of alleged anti-slavery feeling in the South had produced any concrete results. As one judicious southern historian, Professor Charles S. Sydnor, recently put it, "Although the abolitionist movement was followed by a decline of antislavery sentiment in the South, it must be remembered that in all the long years before that movement began no part of the South had made substantial progress toward ending slavery … Southern liberalism had not ended slavery in any state."

In any case, it is difficult for historian seriously to suppose that northerners could have denied themselves feelings of disapproval over slavery. To say that there "should" have been no abolitionists in America before the Civil War is about as sensible as to say that there "should" have been no anti-Nazis in the nineteen-thirties or that there "should" be no anti-Communists in the 1950s.

2) The economic exhaustion argument. Slavery, it has been pointed out, was on the skids economically. It was overcapitalized and inefficient; it immobilized both capital and labor; its one-crop system was draining the soil of fertility; it stood in the way of industrialization. As the South came to realize these facts, Randall said, it would have moved to abolish slavery for its own economic good. As several revisionists have put it, slavery “was ready to break down of its own weight."

This argument assumed, of course, that Southerners would have recognized the cause of their economic predicament and taken the appropriate measures. Yet such an assumption would be plainly contrary to history and to experience. From the beginning the South has always blamed its economic shortcomings, not on its own economic ruling class and its own inefficient use of resources, but on Northern exploitation. Hard times in the eighteen-fifties produced in the South, not a reconsideration of the slavery system, but blasts against the North for the high prices of manufactured goods. The overcapitalization of slavery led, not to criticisms of the system but to increasingly insistent demands for the reopening of the slave trade. When Hinton R. Helper tried to make this Randall argument in 1855, (asserting that emancipation was necessary to save the Southern economy), the South burned his book.

3) Compensated emancipation. Abraham Lincoln made repeated proposals of compensated emancipation. In his annual message to Congress of December 1, 1862, he set forth a detailed plan by which States, on an agreement to abolish slavery by 1900, would receive government bonds in proportion to the number of slaves emancipated. Yet, even though Lincoln's proposals represented a solution of the problem conceivably gratifying to the slaveholder's purse as well as to his pride, they got nowhere. Two-thirds of the border representatives rejected the scheme, even when personally presented to them by Lincoln himself. And, of course, only the pressure of war brought compensated emancipation its limited hearing of 1862.

Still granted these difficulties, does it not remain true that other countries abolished slavery without internal convulsion? If emotionalism had not aggravated the situation beyond hope, Randall has written, then slavery "might have been faced as a national question and dealt with as successfully as the South American countries dealt with the same problem." If Brazil could free its slaves and Russia its serfs in the middle of the nineteenth century without civil war, why could not the United States have done as well?

4. The faulty analogy. There are essential differences between the slavery question in the United States and the problems in Brazil or in Russia. In the first place, Brazil and Russia were able to face servitude " as a national question" because it was, in fact, a national question. Neither country had the American problem of the identification of compact sectional interests with the survival of the slavery system. In the second place, there was no race

problem at all in Russia; and though there was a race problem in Brazil, the more civilized folkways of that country relieved racial differences of the extreme tension which they breed in the South of the United States. In the third place, neither in Russia nor in Brazil did the abolition of servitude involve constitutional issues; and the existence of these issues played a great part in determining the form of the American struggle.

It is hard to draw much comfort, therefore, from the fact that other nations abolished servitude peaceably. The problem in America was peculiarly recalcitrant. The schemes for gradual emancipation got nowhere. Neither internal reform nor economic exhaustion contained much promise for a peaceful solution. The hard fact, indeed, is that the revisionists have not tried seriously to describe the policies by which the slavery problem could have been peacefully resolved. They have resorted instead to broad affirmations of faith: if only the conflict could have been staved off long enough, then somehow, somewhere, we could have worked something out. It is legitimate, I think, to ask how? where? what?-- at least, if these affirmations of faith are to be used as the premise for castigating the unhappy men who had the practical responsibility for finding solutions and failed.

Where have the revisionists gone astray? Foremost, they refused to recognize the moral evil of slavery and that the South was so determined to defend its evil institutions as a moral good that it could never consider any type of change or compromise. In the minds of men like Randall, slavery became important "only as a very ancient labor system near the end of its existence." The attempt to abolish this dying labor system was folly that emerged from the “inflamed, emotional abolitionist imaginations.”

Because the revisionists felt no moral urgency themselves, they deplored as “fanatics” those who did feel it. To say the Civil War was fought over the "unreal" issue of slavery in the territories is like saying that the Second World War was fought over the "unreal" issue of the invasion of Poland. The democracies could not challenge fascism inside Germany any more than opponents of slavery could challenge slavery inside the South; but the extension of slavery, like the extension of fascism, was an act of aggression, which made a moral choice inescapable.

The problem of the inevitability of the Civil War is at the heart of the issue here. The revisionist attempt to argue that the war could have been avoided by "any kind of sane policy" is of interest less in its own right than as an expression of a characteristically sentimental conception of man and of history. And the great vogue of revisionism in the historical profession suggests, in my judgment, ominous weaknesses in the contemporary attitude toward a moral history.

We delude ourselves when we think that history teaches us that evil will be "outmoded" by progress. Simply because we move inevitably into the future does not mean that we will also inevitably eradicate evil. Evil must be met head on. We must understand that sometimes there is no escape from the impeccabilities of moral decision. Not many problems have forced this

decision upon us, but slavery was one that did, and in 1860, the North made the “inevitable” moral choice for war.

**Republican Politicians and African Americans**

**Eugene Berwanger**

Congressmen and senators, especially Republicans from the Middle West, reflected the race prejudice of their constituencies on the national level. Prejudicial statements expounded by the most radical and conservative Republicans clearly indicated that adherence to antislavery or anti-extension of slavery doctrines did not denote a lenient attitude toward African Americans, free or slave. The more politically astute Republicans, sensing the importance of the accusation of black equality, which the Democrats circulated against them, attempted to allay the public apprehension that their party would drastically alter the existing status of the Negro. Shortly after the election of 1856, Henry Wilson, the Republican abolitionist senator from Massachusetts, declared that he could never believe in the mental or intellectual equality of the Negro “with this proud and domineering white race of ours,” and he warned Republicans “to close their mouths against” the system of slavery and concentrate on non-extension. William H. Seward, the Republican Senator from New York and Lincoln’s Secretary of State, described the Negro as a “foreign and feeble element, like the Indian, incapable of assimilation [and] unwisely and unnecessarily transplanted to our fields.”‘

Southern Democrats took a special pleasure in baiting Republicans over their stand on slavery and race, often accusing them of being “soft on the negro issue.” This aroused ire among the northern representatives. One Republican commented to his Southern colleagues that “as long as the two races lived side by side in the same country, the white race should remain superior and take all steps necessary to discourage Negroes from seeking any degree of equality.’

Of course, Democrats in the North were also equally opposed to any type of rights for African Americans. In his years in the House of Representatives and the Senate, Democrat Stephen A. Douglas persistently defended laws that prohibited free African Americans from entering his state. On this issue, Douglas never wavered. Because Illinois bordered on two slave states, which required emancipated slaves to leave, the law was necessary to prevent the Illinois from becoming “an asylum for the old and decrepit and broken-down negroes that may emigrate or be sent to it.”

Anti-Negro prejudice became more pronounced as the extension of slavery issue became more dominant after 1850. It found its major expression among the Republicans and Democrats in the western free states. These politicians feared that the territories might be inundated by the Negro race if slavery were allowed to expand. Early opposition to slavery extension centered in the Free Soil party, and some of the members adhering to its principle did so more out of “repugnance to the presence of the Negro” than to the moral revulsion of slavery. Indeed, David Wilmot, the Pennsylvania Democrat, did not introduce his historic proviso because he felt sympathy for the Negro as a slave. “I plead the cause and the rights of white men and I would preserve to free white labor a country where my own race and own color can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor.” On other occasions, Wilmot expressed his prejudice more explicitly, saying: “By God, sir, men born and nursed of white women are not going to be ruled by men who were brought up on the milk of some damn negro wench!”’ Such statements made it evident that in introducing the proviso, Wilmot really wished to preserve the western territory exclusively for the white race.

Clearly, anti-Negro sentiment forced mid-western congressmen to refrain from expressions, which could be construed as favoring racial equality. Benjamin Franklin Wade of Ohio for example, was a radical Republican but had no love for “the negro.” Even after he became a radical leader in the Republican Party, he strongly advocated colonization of “negroes back to Africa,” to prevent the North from being flooded with undesirable black people. When Wade first arrived in Washington in 1851, he was shocked by the great number of African Americans in the capital, and he described the city as “a mean God forsaken n---- ridden place.” Although Wade professed “to like the negro better than the southern white man,” he wrote that he could not abide their odor and bemoaned the fact that the food was “all cooked by n--s until I can smell and taste the n---.”

The growth of the Republican Party between 1854 and 1860 brought the race issue to the surface because Democratic editors and leaders fastened the doctrine of black equality to it. The Democrats saw this as winning campaign propaganda. Republicans were portrayed as favoring miscegenation and full social and political equality. Democrats warned that the “Black Republican” Party would appoint Negroes to governmental offices and elect them as state and federal legislators. “Negro equality,” insisted one Indiana Democrat, “is the inevitable consequence of Republican principles.”"

These labels conveying racial equality were attached early to the Republican Party, and Democratic editors continued to use them all through the Civil War. Such epithets as “Abolitionists,” “Amalgamationists,” “Miscegenationists,” “Freedom Shirkers,” “Negro Worshippers,” and “Woolies” were common. An Iowa editor warned that the new party in his state was intent on “glorifying the negro at the expense of the white man” and that its members would go to any extremes to follow the tenets of “Seward love of the n---.” An editor in Ohio reprinted selected quotations from speeches of the more radical Republican anti- slavery proponents, labeled them the “Congo Creed,” and used them to prove his charges of equality and miscegenation.“ In Illinois Charles Lanphier, editor of the State Register, printed false stories of African Americans marching in Republican parades and argued that this indicated the Republican desire for racial equality.

Playing on the fear of Negro immigration, Lanphier pointed out that the abolition sentiment of the party would encourage masses of “a degraded and inferior race” to flock to the North. “Our jails and almshouses would be filled to overflowing [and] outrages too monstrous to be named would be of daily occurrence.

Republicans, in answering the Democratic charges against them, were almost frantic to disclaim any intention of improving the Negro’s status and made it abundantly clear that their party had little or no humanitarian interest in Negro welfare. One Ohioan wrote that “the ‘negro question,’ is a white man’s question, the question of the right of free white laborers to the soil of the territories.” He further warned the Democrats to stop “shouting ‘Sambo’ at us. We have no Sambo in our platform. We object to Sambo. We don’t want him about. We insist that he shall not be forced upon us.” For him the Republican party was created to improve and enhance the status of the white and not the negro race.”

To protect themselves against Southern Democratic attacks, Republicans continually accepted slavery as protected by the Constitution in the Southern states, but stressed non-extension as their major anti-slavery principle because it protected the West for white citizens. Non-extension, Republicans said, would prevent the spread of the Negro westward. Negroes would not migrate to the territories unless they were taken by slaveholders; by prohibiting the extension of slavery, Negroes would be kept out.“ Possibly Horace Greeley expressed the Republican Party’s stand most succinctly by writing that “all the unoccupied territory . . . shall be reserved for the benefit of the white Caucasian race —- a thing which cannot be except by the exclusion of slavery.”

Besides defending themselves against accusations of racial equality and abolitionism, Republicans frequently turned the Democratic charges back on the accusers. Incorrectly asserting that Richard M. Johnson, Vice President during the Van Buren administration, had a Negro wife, Republican newspaper editors insisted that miscegenation was more prevalent in the South where the Republican Party was virtually nonexistent. In fact, while reversing racial equality indictments, Republican editors became just as emotional as their Democratic counterparts. One declared that the Democrats, especially in the South, should be referred to as the “Mu1atto Party,” because its main efforts were directed toward “bleaching the n----. The best blood of Democratic politicians ran in the veins of the ‘negro slave.”

By 1858, however, Republican leaders began to fear the Democratic attacks were working, and they decided that something had to be done to indicate more clearly their position on the race question. Francis P. Blair found the solution in a Republican supported colonization project in Central America. Blair wrote, “It would do more than a thousand speeches to allay the fears of the people that the Republicans wish to set negroes free among them to be their equals?” Blair declared that only by “colonization could negroes improve themselves and achieve happiness.”

Numerous Republican leaders quickly supported the new colonization plan. Trumbull wished any measure to remove the Negro “Godspeed.” Giddings gave his blessing but insisted that colonization should be voluntary. Even the outspoken abolitionist, Gerrit Smith, declared the plan gratified him. Republican editors also gave the Central American project avid support. One in Oregon proclaimed colonization as a Republican standard and the only solution to the increasing threats presented by the presence of the Negro race.“

As the election of 1860 approached, Republican leaders, especially from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, made a concerted effort to disprove the charges that Republicans favored emancipation and Negro equality. Declarations that the Republican Party was the “white man’s party” became almost daily utterances in Congress during April and May, 1860. James Harlan, an Iowa senator, answered his question, “Shall the Territories be Africanized?” by concluding that Republican policy would prevent this and preserve the vast domain for the white race.” “The Republican Party has never and will never accept the doctrine of social and political equality.”

No individual did more to assure the Negrophobes about the principles of the Republican Party than Senator Lyman Trumbull. Soon after Congress organized in 1859, he declared, “We, the Republican Party, are the white man's party. We are for the free white man, and for making white labor acceptable and honorable, which it can never be when negro slave labor is brought into competition with it.” God himself, Trumbull insisted, had created a distinction between the races, which never could be erased, and he would never consent to Negro equality on any terms. “The negro must be deported.” The effect of Trumbull’s remarks was immediately apparent. One correspondent declared that the senator’s colonization suggestion was lauded throughout Illinois; another wrote that the “black man” must be deported to prevent miscegenation.

Throughout the campaign Republicans made no pretense of being concerned with the fate of the African American and insisted that theirs was a party of white labor. By introducing the note of white supremacy, they hoped to win the votes of the Northerner who hated African Americans and to those who were opposed to the extension of black slavery into territories they intended to inhabit. For example, one party leader said at the national convention, “It is not so much in reference to the rights of the negro that we are here, but it is for the protection of the rights of the laboring whites, for the protection of ourselves and our liberties.”

True radical abolitionists, such as Garrison, and some Negroes were displeased with the Republican line. Garrison lamented the fact that Wade, Chase, and “even Father Giddings” took little interest in the Negro. He told his friends that “both parties [were] unwilling to extend to [the Negro] the rights of a free man.” If Negro parents dared to send their children to the schools of Illinois, one abolitionist added, “Abraham Lincoln would kick them out in the name of Republicanism.” Clearly, Garrison did not see the Republican Party as a threat to the “Peculiar Institution.”

Garrison’s concerns became perfectly clear in 1860. The early positions assumed on the slavery question and Negro status by the more prominent contenders for the Republican presidential nomination affected their acceptability as possible candidates. As the May, 1860, convention approached, conservatives warned Republican leaders that the nomination of a conservative man was necessary for victory at the polls. Trumbull was informed that “the great n---issue [was] disappearing,” but the selection of the wrong candidate would raise it again. As a result, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey politicians were violently opposed to William Seward’ or anyone who hinted at Negro equality.

This apprehension about Negro equality, the dislike of extreme abolitionism, and the necessity of securing votes in the southern counties of those states bordering on the slave states made Lincoln a logical choice for the Republican Party. Lincoln’s view on the African Americans was especially acceptable to the anti-extensionists in the abolition-hating counties of southern Indiana. “Indeed,” wrote Giddings, “Lincoln was selected because he was supposed to be able to carry [Illinois] and Indiana and [was] acceptable to Pennsylvania, and his anti-slavery sentiment in the territory had been less prominent” than that of the other possible candidates.“

Lincoln revealed his position in 1854, and he expressed it more clearly as Douglas threw the Negro equality charge at him in the senatorial campaign of 1858. To a Peoria audience in 1854 Lincoln declared, “Let it not be said I am contending for . . . political and social equality between the whites and blacks. . . . I am . . . arguing against the EXTENSION of a bad thing. [Should we make free negroes] politically and socially our equals?” “My own feelings will not admit to this.”

At Ottawa, four years later, Lincoln told his listeners that the physical differences between the two races prevented equality. One race must necessarily be supreme and, “I am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position.” The next month at Clinton Lincoln reprimanded Douglas for his constant remarks about Republicans favoring racial equality. Such charges were made simply to gain votes, Lincoln insisted, for “he knows that we advocate no such doctrines as those.”

The race question was prominent enough by the time the two men met at Charleston for Lincoln to begin his speech with the statement that he was not and never had been “in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people.”

Clearly, if the Republican Party needed a man of conservative expression to win the uncommitted vote, Abraham Lincoln was their answer because he was politician enough to sense the regards of the people who opposed Negro equality and to express them in terms of his background and section.

Republicans were politically astute to demand the limitation of slavery and, at the same time, to refuse political equality to free African Americans. Beginning in the 1840’s and definitely after 1854, the terms “abolitionism” and “antislavery” had different connotations for most westerners. Abolitionism meant freedom, equality and voting. On the other hand, antislavery meant opposition to the extension of the slavery into the West. This was a concept, which most westerners could accept because it coincided with what they considered their best interests. Since they believed the Negro inferior to the white man, westerners refused to accept them as equals on a political or social level. Understanding this attitude, Republican leaders made it sufficiently clear that they had no intention of uplifting the Negro or equalizing his place in society.

**Slavery and Ideology By: Eric Foner**

**I**

"Of the American Civil War," James Ford Rhodes wrote over a half a century ago, "it may safely be asserted that there was a single cause, slavery." In this opinion, Rhodes was merely echoing a view which seemed self-evident to Abraham Lincoln and many other participants in the sectional conflict. Their interpretation implicitly assumes that the ante-bellum Republican Party was primarily a vehicle for anti-slavery sentiment. Yet partly because historians are skeptical of explanations made by participants of their own behavior, Rhodes' view quickly fell under attack. Even before Rhodes wrote, John R. Commons had characterized the Republicans as primarily a homestead party, and Charles and Mary Beard later added the tariff as one of its fundamental concerns. More recently, historians have stressed aversion to the presence of blacks-free or slave-in the western territories as the Republicans' motive for opposing the extension of slavery. Because the Republicans disavowed the intention of attacking slavery in states where it already existed by direct federal action, their anti-slavery declarations have been dismissed by some historians as hypocritical.

Controversy over the proper place of anti-slavery in the Republican ideology is hardly new. During the 1850's, considerable debate occurred within abolitionist circles on the proper attitude toward Republicanism. Many abolitionists refused to participate in politics, believing that politicians compromised too often and got little done on significant issues like slavery. It is not surprising that William Lloyd Garrison and his followers should have wasted little enthusiasm on the Republicans.

And yet it is important to remember that despite their criticisms, leading abolitionists maintained close personal relations with Republican leaders, particularly the radicals. The flow of letters between Chase and Smith, cordial even while each criticized the attitude of the other, is one example of this. Similarly, Parker kept up a correspondence with Henry Wilson, Charles Sumner, and William Seward as well as Chase. "Our agitation, you know, helps keep yours alive in the rank and file," was the way Wendell Phillips expressed it to Sumner. And Seward agreed that the abolitionists played a vital role in awakening the public conscience-"opening the way where the masses can follow."

And so, the evidence strongly suggests that outside of Garrison's immediate circle, most abolitionists voted with the Republican Party despite their wish that the party adopt a more aggressive anti-slavery position. This attitude of many abolitionists was summed up by Elizur Wright who insisted that most abolitionists voted for Lincoln in 1860. While Wright criticized ' the Republicans for their shortcomings on slavery, he acknowledged that "the greatest recommendation of the Republican Party is, that its enemies do not quite believe its disclaimers, while they do believe that [it is] sincerely opposed to slavery as far as it goes." Prophetically, he added: "Woe to the slave power under a Republican President if it strikes the first blow." The fact that so many abolitionists, not to mention radical Republicans, supported the Republican Party, is an indication that anti-slavery formed no small part of the Republican ideology.

Recent historians have concluded, moreover, that historians like Charles A. Beard greatly overestimated the importance of economic issues in the elections of 1856, 1858, and 1860. If one thing is evident after analyzing the various elements which made up the party, it is that anti-slavery was one of the few policies which united all Republican factions. For political reasons, if for no other, the Republicans were virtually obliged to make anti-slavery the main focus of their political appeal.

Conservative Republicans and radicals, ex-Democrats and former Whigs, all agreed that slavery was the major issue of the 1850's. "It is manifest to all," Chase declared, "that there is an unusual degree of political interest pervading the country-that the people, everywhere, are excited, . . . and yet, from one extremity of the Republic to the other, scarcely any other subject is mentioned, or any other question discussed . . . save the question of negro slavery. . . ."

The Northern anti-slavery ideology was not limited to Republicans alone. Indeed, many Democrats who supported Steven A. Douglas held an anti-slavery attitude as well. It is important to remember that by 1860 the Douglas Democrats shared a good many of the Republicans' attitudes toward the South. One of the most striking aspects of the Democratic debate over the Lecompton constitution was the way in which the Douglasites echoed the Republican anti-southern views.

The bitterness of Douglas Democrats against the South did not abate between 1858 and 1860. They believed that the South had embarked upon a crusade to force slavery into all the territories, and protested that endorsement of such a goal would destroy the northern Democracy. Indeed, many Republicans believed that Douglas and his followers had acquired "a feeling against Slavery. . . ." A few Democrats did defect to the Republican Party including F. P. Stanton, the former Democratic governor of Kansas. In addition, when the 1860 Democratic national convention broke up over the South's insistence on a platform guaranteeing slavery in the territories, the bitterness of the Douglasites knew no bounds. The reporter Murat Halstead observed that he had "never heard Abolitionists talk more rancorously of the people of the South than the Douglas men here." There was much truth in the observation of one Republican that the experiences of the Douglas Democrats in the years preceding the Civil War went a long way toward explaining the unanimity of the North's response to the attack on Fort Sumter.

**II**

Clearly, Republicans and Douglas Democrats had more in common regarding slavery than many scholars believed. The attitude of the Douglasites toward the South on the eve of the Civil War partially reflected their assessment of northern opinion regarding slavery. John C. Calhoun had estimated in 1847 that while only 5 percent of northerners supported the abolitionists, more than 66 percent viewed slavery as an evil, and were willing to oppose its extension constitutionally. Similarly, a conservative Republican declared in 1858, "There is no man [in the North] who is an advocate of slavery. There is no man from that section of the country who will go before his constituents and advocate the extension of slavery."

Anti-slavery as an abstract feeling had long existed in the North. It had not, however, prevented abolitionists from being mobbed, nor anti-slavery parties from going down to defeat. Democrats and Whigs had long been able to appeal to devotion to the Union, racism, and economic issues, to neutralize anti-slavery as a political force. "The anti-slavery sentiment," Hamilton Fish explained in 1854, "is inborn, and almost universal at the North ...

By 1860 it had become eminently clear that the fundamental achievement of the Republican Party was the creation and articulation of an ideology which blended personal and sectional interest with morality so perfectly that it became the most potent political force in the nation. The free labor assault upon slavery and southern society, coupled with the idea that an aggressive Slave Power was threatening the most fundamental values and interests of the free states, hammered the slavery issue home to the northern public more emphatically than an appeal to morality alone could ever have done.

To agree with Rhodes that slavery was ultimately the cause of the Civil War, therefore, is not to accept the corollary that the basis of the Republican opposition to slavery was simple moral fervor. In a speech to the Senate in 1848, John M. Niles listed a dozen different reasons for his support of the Wilmot Proviso-but only once did he mention his belief that slavery was morally repugnant. And thirteen years later, George William Curtis observed that "there is very little moral mixture in the 'Anti-Slavery' feeling of this country. A great deal is abstract philanthropy; part is hatred of slaveholders; a great part is jealousy for white labor, very little is consciousness of wrong done and the wish to right it." The Republican ideology included all these elements, and much more. Rhodes argued that northerners wished to preserve the Union as a first step toward abolition. A more accurate formulation would reverse the equation and say that many Republicans were anti-slavery from the conviction that slavery threatened the Union. Aside from some radicals, who occasionally flirted with disunion, most Republicans were united by the twin principles of free soil and Unionism. Cassius M. Clay even suggested that the Free-Soilers in 1851 adopt the name "Liberty and Union" party, in order to impress their essential goals upon the electorate. The New York Times emphasized this aspect of Republican thought in 1857: "The barbaric institution of slavery will become more and more odious to the northern people because it will become more and more plain that the States which cling to Slavery thrust back the American idea, and reject the influences of the Union."

Still, Unionism, despite its importance to the mass of northerners, and obviously crucial to any explanation of the Republicans' decision to resist secession, was only one aspect of the Republican ideology. It would have been just as logical to compromise on the slavery question if the preservation of the Union were the paramount goal of Republican politics. Nor should Republicanism be seen merely as the expression of the northern drive toward political power. We have seen that resentment of southern power played its part, that many Democratic-Republicans had watched with growing jealousy the South's domination of the Democratic party and the national government and that many former Whigs were convinced that the South was blocking economic programs essential for national economic development.  But there is more to the coming of the Civil War than the rivalry of sections for political power. New England, after all, could accept its own decline in political power without secession.

In short, none of these elements can stand separately; they dissolve into one another, and the total product emerges as ideology. Resentment of southern political power, devotion to the Union, anti-slavery based upon the free labor argument, and moral revulsion to the peculiar institution--all these elements were intertwined in the Republican world-view. What they added up to was the conviction that North and South represented two social systems whose values, interests, and future prospects were in sharp, perhaps mortal, conflict with one another. The sense of difference, of estrangement, and of growing hostility with which Republicans viewed the South, cannot be overemphasized. Theodore Sedgwick of New York perhaps expressed it best when he declared during the secession crisis: "The policy and aims of slavery, its institutions and civilization, and the character of its people, are all at variance with the policy, aims, institutions, education, and character of the North. There is an irreconcilable difference in our interests, institutions, and pursuits; in our sentiments and feelings." Greeley's Tribune said the same thing more succinctly: "We are not one people. We are two peoples. We are a people for Freedom and a people for Slavery. Between the two, conflict is inevitable." An attack not simply on the institution of slavery, but upon southern society itself, was thus at the heart of the Republican mentality.

At the heart of this Republican ideology was the need to stop the spread of slavery into the territories. Its importance went even beyond the belief shared widely in both sections that slavery required expansion to survive and that confinement to the South would kill it. For in each separate ideology was the conviction that its own social system must expand, not only to insure its own survival but to prevent the expansion of all the evils the other represented.

It was clear from Lincoln’s House Divided Speech that Republicans believed that a free society, with its promise of social mobility for the laborer, required territorial expansion, and that this was combined with a messianic desire to spread the benefits of a free society to other areas and peoples. Southerners had their own grandiose design. "They had a magnificent dream of empire.”

As a result, the struggle for the West represented an inevitable and irreconcilable contest between two expansive societies, only one of whose aspirations could prevail. Here then was a basic reason why the South could not accept the verdict of 1860. In 1848, Martin Van Buren had said that the South opposed the principle of free soil because "the prohibition carries with it a reproach to the slaveholding states, and . . . submission to it would degrade them."

**III**

Although it has not been the purpose of this study to examine in any detailed way the southern mind in 1860, what has been said about the Republican ideology does help to explain the rationale for secession. The political wars of the 1850's, centering on the issue of slavery extension, had done much to erode whatever good feeling existed between the sections. It is thus no mystery that southerners could not seriously believe Republicans who promised not to attack slavery in the states. For one thing, in opposing its extension, Republicans had been logically forced to attack the institution itself. Frederick Douglass agreed that agitation for the Wilmot Proviso served "to keep the subject before the people-to deepen their hatred of the system-and to break up the harmony between the Northern white people and the Southern slaveholders. . . ." As we have seen, many Republicans, both radicals and moderates, explicitly stated that non-extension was simply the first step, that there would come a day when slavery would cease to exist.

As southerners viewed the Republican party's rise to power in one northern state after another, and witnessed the increasingly anti-southern tone of the northern Democrats, they could hardly be blamed for feeling apprehensive about the future. Late in 1859, after a long talk with the moderate Unionist Senator from Virginia, R. M. T. Hunter, Senator James Dixon of Connecticut reported that the Virginian was deeply worried. "What seems to alarm Hunter is the growth of the Anti-slavery feeling at the North." According to Hunter, the South feared that a Republican administration would adopt the radicals' program of action against slavery. Had not William H. Seward announced in 1858 , "I know, and you know, that a revolution has begun. I know, and all the world knows, that revolutions never go backward." Did not Republican Congressmen openly express their conviction that “slavery must die"? When Lincoln was elected in 1860 Southerners were sure the revolution had begun.