

Those People

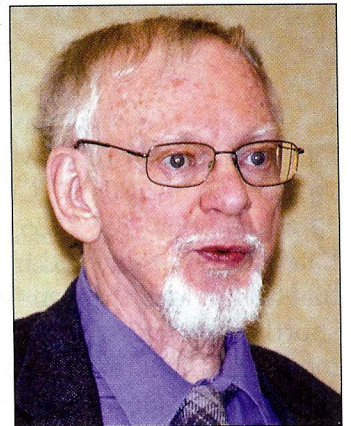
By Dr. Clyde Wilson

The North is full of tangled things — G.K. Chesterton

A meddling Yankee is God's worst creation; he cannot run his own affairs correctly, but is constantly interfering in the affairs of others, and he is always ready to repent of everyone's sins, but his own. — North Carolina newspaper, 1854

The Northern onslaught upon slavery was no more than a piece of specious humbug designed to conceal its desire for economic control of the Southern States.

— Charles Dickens, 1862



General Lee, with characteristic restraint, always spoke of the invaders who came to loot and destroy the South as “those people.” Most Southerners then and later called them Yankees. There are several theories about the origin of the term “Yankee,” but nobody knows for sure. The word has been in continual use since early colonial times, usually in an uncomplimentary way. Most likely it originated among the Dutch settlers in New Netherlands (New York) as a garbled reference to “English,” designating their peculiar neighbors to the east in New England.

For a long time, right up to the War to Prevent Southern Inde-

pendence¹, “Yankee” referred specifically to New Englanders, and was used to mark them as distinct from other Americans. Not until the War did Southerners begin to apply the term to all Northerners, who indeed had started to act like Yankees. When ambitious young “Honest Abe” Lincoln was court- ing popularity among his pioneer neighbours in Illinois, most of whom came from the South, he had a fund of “Yankee” stories — anecdotes and jokes about crooked peddlers and religious hypocrites from New England. When he came to town, they put the women, children, and preachers to bed, and the boys gathered around the iron stove at the local store to hear his

stories. The Yankee stories were popular, but not as popular as the dirty ones, for which Lincoln was regionally famous.

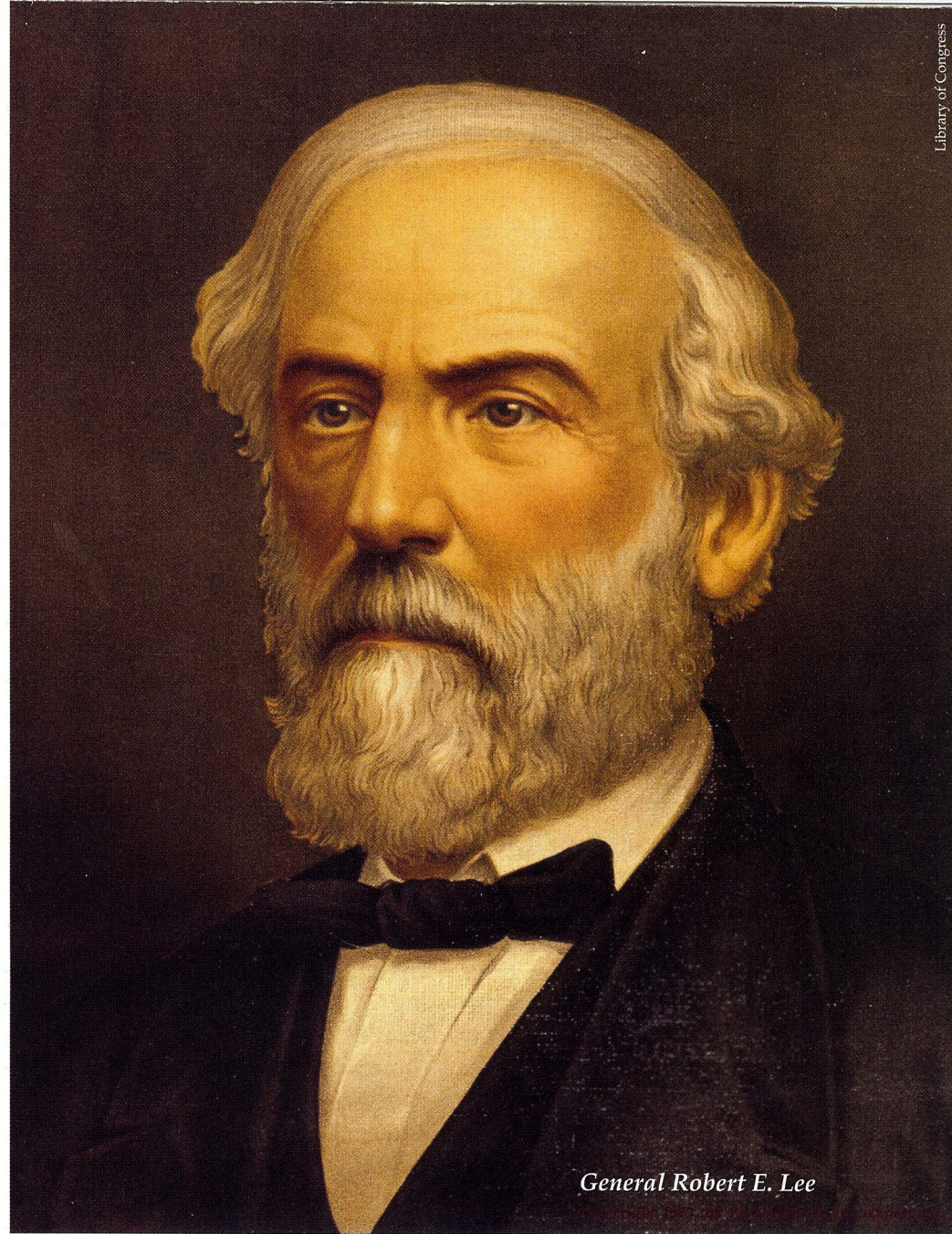
It is difficult to believe now, but for a long time most Americans, including most Northerners, regarded New England, not the South, as the peculiar, out-of-step section of the country. Yankees were the outsiders who thought and behaved differently from everyone else, and usually in disagreeable ways. In fact, the South, in the times of Washington, Jefferson, and Jackson, was the generally accepted model of what was *American*. Remember, nine of the first twelve presidents were Southern plantation owners.

The New York writer Wash-

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ington Irving's famous 1820 story about the Headless Horseman, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, takes place among rural Hudson Valley people whose society could hardly be distinguished from the South. Ichabod Crane was a cowardly Yankee twit from Connecticut who presumed too far on the hospitality of the New Yorkers, so one of the young blades scared him nearly to death and sent him fleeing back to where he came from. The New York writer James Fenimore Cooper had admirable Southern characters in his novels and he despised the riffraff from New England who swarmed into the region his family had settled and developed. The New Yorker Herman Melville may well have created his fanatical Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* as a portrait of a Yankee abolitionist. By the 1850s, however, New York (and portions of the Midwest) had been colonised by Yankees, who made up much of the state's population and were the leading newspaper editors and rich men of New York City.

Yet even as late as the eve of the War, the Democratic governor of New York, Horatio Seymour, blamed sectional conflict on New England fanaticism, which had driven the South to secession. He declared in a public address that the attempt to stop secession by force would end in destroying the American principle of self-government. And such a war would be greatly immoral. "Upon whom are we to wage war?" Seymour asked. "Our own countrymen ... Their courage has never been questioned ... They battled by our side with equal valour in the Revolutionary struggle ... Virginia sent her sons, under the command of Washington, to the relief of beleaguered Boston. Alone, the South defeated the last and most desperate effort of British power to divide our country, at the battle of New Orleans." The



General Robert E. Lee

South had always furnished its full share of soldiers and wise and patriotic statesmen. Were Northerners to be dragooned into an ungodly war against other Americans?² Later, Lincoln was to find it necessary to send seasoned combat troops to New York City to control the elections and enforce the conscription of cannon fodder among the poorer classes.

George Washington had uncomplimentary things to say about New England soldiers in the War of Independence. Thomas Jefferson considered Yankees the fount

of most troubles in the new Union. In 1798 Jefferson wrote "that we are completely under the saddle of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and that they ride us very hard, cruelly insulting our feelings, as well as exhausting our strength and substance." The Yankees were "marked by such a perversity of character," Jefferson added, that they were permanently divided from the rest of America.³ Indeed, Jefferson's preference for the separation of church and state stemmed in part from his distaste for the influence exercised by the politicised Puritan preach-

ers of New England. In numerous election sermons they portrayed Jefferson as a French Jacobin who intended to set up the guillotine and share out the women. From the beginning the Yankees were given to rhetorical extremism, something which played a large part in driving the South into secession. (For just a few out of literally thousands of examples, Waldo Emerson declaring that the inmates of the Massachusetts penitentiary were superior beings to the leaders of the South and Thoreau likening the mass murderer John Brown to Christ.)

One can understand a great deal of American history by remembering a simple fact about the founding. New England Puritans came to America to get away from a world of sinners and to construct "a shining City upon a Hill" which would be an example for all mankind of a superior commonwealth. The Yankee elite kept all of their over-developed and self-centered righteousness after they lost their Christianity and replaced it with the imported German philosophy of Transcendentalism. By contrast, people who came to settle the South saw America as a promising garden to be cultivated, a place where land could be had and personal honour and independence be established by younger sons and common folk in ways that were no longer possible in the Mother Country.

We can see the difference starkly proved by laying side by side two diaries from the early 18th century, those of the Reverend Cotton Mather of Massachusetts and Colonel William Byrd II of Virginia. Allowing that both men were Englishmen born in the North American colonies, they could not have been more different. Mather and Byrd lived in different mental universes. While Byrd was writing in his diary about his good times (even the guilty ones), his wide reading, his

socialising with cordial neighbours, his love of nature, and his adventures in the wilderness, Mather was secretly recording the evil hearts of his associates, the failure of the world to fully recognise his merit, and complaints and lectures to God about his insufficient rewards.⁴

There are *scholars* who assert there is nothing distinctive about the South except its defense of slavery and segregation, that the South has never had any separate culture worthy of notice. Slavery existed in all the colonies and it had nothing to do with the differences in the mental worlds of Mather and Byrd, differences which obviously go back to the early days of the settlement of America. A Confederate wit captured this profound difference with the remark that the War happened because Southerners were a contented people and Yankees were not.

Another fundamental thing to understand is that the North changed radically after the founding of the United States, especially in the 1850s, while the South, though expanding over a huge territory, remained substantially the same. (What history knows as the Southern people came into being in the late 18th century with the comfortable merging of the colonial tidewater and the later settlers of the upcountry frontier.) The official view of the War tells us Lincoln sought only to preserve the glorious old Union of the Founding Fathers, while Southerners, crazed by slavery, repudiated venerable American principles and tried to destroy it. This is the opposite of the truth. The leaders of the South (Jefferson Davis, R.E. Lee, J.E. Johnston, and many others), were actual sons of the founding generation. They knew their fathers had created the Union for the benefit of their own people. Southerners came to secession as they realised being under a

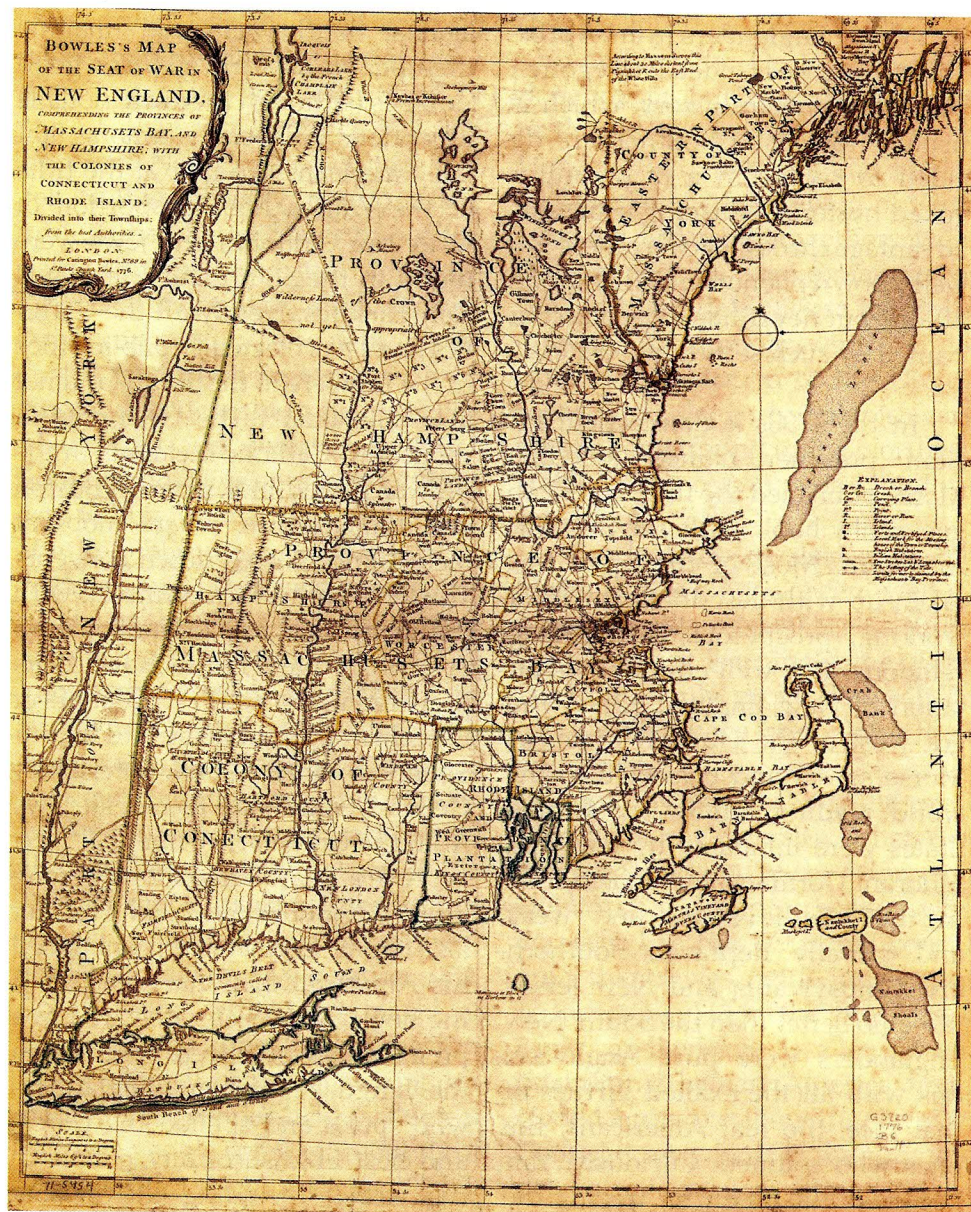
government controlled by people who were constantly "insulting our feelings" and "exhausting our strength and substance" defeated the purposes for which the Union had been made. Portions of the North had been waging a cold war against the South from the very beginning. As the great Southern writer William Gilmore Simms remarked, Northerners had been "fed on tiger's meat" for half a century, and it was not surprising that many were ravenous to devour the South. The North sought to convert a Union made for brotherhood and mutual benefit into a *nation* which they would dominate in their own interest.

New Englanders from the first opposed every good measure under the US government and clamoured for special privileges for themselves. One of the first laws passed by the first US Congress was to continue subsidising the Yankee fishing fleet as the British government had done before independence. While Virginia conquered the vast Northwest territory and gave it to the Union for the use of all Americans, Connecticut demanded special land for itself (the Western Reserve in Ohio). New Englanders opposed the Louisiana Purchase and in general most American land acquisition and westward movement, which would mean an ever-growing part of America would be beyond their control.

Despite all the old Western movies which portray imaginary pioneers from Boston moving west in covered wagons, New Englanders were not big hands at settling new territory until Southerners had made it safe. They decried settlers of the frontier as crude barbarians. When they moved into the Midwest they looked down on the pioneers who had preceded them there as ignorant and lazy "Hoosiers." While Southerners were exploring the

Great Plains and Rocky Mountains and contending with such fierce opponents as the Mexicans and Comanche, Emerson in Massachusetts was orating about the “Self-Reliance” of the superior New England character. (Emerson got himself economically “self-reliant” for life by marrying the terminally ill daughter of a banker.) And Thoreau was celebrating bold individualism and the *Great Outdoors* at his little pond at Walden, in sight of the Boston smokestacks. (He did not have to work since his father was rich and Walden was close enough for home cooking and laundry as needed.) The brilliantly creative Southern writer Edgar Allan Poe referred to the self-important New England writers as “Frog-pondians,” croakers who mistook their little kingdom for the world.

During the War of 1812, Yankees traded with the enemy and refused the president’s constitutional call to have the militia brought into federal service. (Though for decades after the war, Massachusetts demanded the federal government pay the expenses of the militia which had been called out but not allowed to leave the state, and demanded pensions for their *service*.) During the War of 1812 Yankees talked openly of secession, something which no Southerner ever did in a time of foreign invasion. It was common knowledge that Yankees crowded the rolls of Revolutionary War pensioners by fraud or by inflating what had been 30 days’ peaceful militia duty into glorious war service. And then Yankee writers used their over-representation on the pension rolls to claim the War of Independence had been fought mostly by New Englanders.⁵ Southerners like Washington, John Taylor and Nathaniel Macon refused financial rewards for their patriotic service in the war, and such heroes as Francis Marion’s men and the



fighters at Kings Mountain were seldom on the official rolls at all. This is not surprising since Southerners fought and sacrificed in the War of Independence for liberty and self-government while New Englanders were driven by motives of economic profit and religious bigotry.

Politically and culturally, the Yankees considered themselves to be the only true Americans. Their interests and their virtues, in their opinion, were the American standard. When young John C. Calhoun came to the House of Representatives in 1811 and made a speech about the plight of Ameri-

can sailors impressed by the British, a New England member scornfully called him a backwoodsman who had never seen the sea. A few years later, Yankees insisted the government provide them with high tariffs (taxes) on imported goods so all Americans would be forced to buy their manufactured products. This was so obviously correct (to them) — to oppose it was denounced as treason. And when Southerners pointed out the low price of cotton and the high price of goods because of the tariff, Yankees replied in Congress all Southern economic problems were due to Southerners’ well-known laziness and inferior-

ity to New Englanders in enterprise. This arrogance is indeed a forgotten part of American history, which is usually told as if Southerners decided to secede in a fit of unprovoked hysteria. Grasping economic advantage through government is a well-known phenomenon in human affairs, but never has it been accompanied by such self-righteousness.

In the 1790s a Connecticut Puritan preacher named Jedediah Morse published the first American geography book. Only the title was American. Most of the book was taken up with describing the hard-working, prosperous, law-abiding, religious and well-educated population of New England. Once you got west of the Hudson River, as Morse saw it and conveyed to the world reading public, the United States were inhabited by lazy and ignorant Germans and Scotch-Irish in the Middle States and weak and morally depraved Southerners. Pennsylvania and New Jersey fared no better than the South. New Englanders were pure Anglo-Saxons with all the exalted virtues of that race, the real Americans, the ones who counted. Curiously, Yankees take the credit for freeing the slaves, presumably because of their zeal for the equality of all mankind, but they long regarded other white Americans as people of lower or mongrel breed. That attitude has not disappeared even today. A Northeastern *intellectual* recently remarked snidely that Pennsylvania was "Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, with Mississippi in between."

It is of interest and relevance that Roman Catholics and Jews found an accepted place, sometimes a very successful place, in the South when such was unknown in the North. Today, most American Catholics and Jews, who are descended from immigrants who came long after the War, join in the Yankee hue and cry

against Southerners and imagine their people have always been good Yankees (although there are notable exceptions, especially among Italian-Americans). In fact, at the time of the War, a high proportion of American Catholics and Jews were found in the South and were loyal Confederates. Nearly all the Catholics and Jews elected to public office in the US were in the South (and not just Louisiana).⁶ The two most famous anti-Catholic incidents in the prewar period took place in Boston and Philadelphia, where mobs attacked and burned down convents. The local authorities connived with the mobs, and few offenders were ever prosecuted. No such incidents occurred in the South. The letters of Lincoln's supporters are full of anti-Semitic comments, and, notoriously, General Grant was to banish Jews from the Union army lines.

A few years after Morse's geography was published, Noah Webster, also from Connecticut, published his American dictionary and spelling book. As Webster declared in a preface, his works were based upon the language of New Englanders who spoke and spelled the purest and best English of any people in the world, including the mother country. Webster also introduced peculiar new spellings for a supposedly improved language — "honor" for "honour" and "exercize" for "exercise," for example. It is not widely known, but such aberrations were ignored by most Americans until the War. Some Southerners still insist on spelling real English rather than Yankee English. And Southerners naturally speak in accents close to those of Shakespeare.⁷

Noah Webster went south to sell his books. He paused in Baltimore to issue a pamphlet telling the people they needed to be more industrious in imitation of New Englanders. Like many people at the time, he presented himself to the elder statesmen Jefferson and Madison at

their plantations. This was a typical ploy of Yankee wannabe celebrities. They were received politely and thereafter promoted themselves by claiming the acquaintance and approval of the great men. What Jefferson really thought was put into a letter to James Madison in which he described Noah Webster as "a mere pedagogue of very limited understanding and very strong prejudices and party passions."

In the 1790s both Morse and Webster were critical of slavery, though their attitude contained not a trace of sympathy for black people. They thought Southern blacks did not work hard enough and were allowed to enjoy themselves too boisterously, and they corrupted the white people by their natural immorality.

In his diary, kept on his trip to darkest Dixie, Webster wrote:

*O New England! How superior are thy inhabitants in morals, literature, civility, and industry!*⁸

So far as these people were concerned "America" and New England were the same thing. They were the only Americans who counted. After their treasonous stance in the War of 1812 Yankees were in general bad favor. In response they started a deliberate and well-organized campaign for domination of the still-developing culture and identity of the United States.⁹ Busy writers, journalists, schoolmarm, orators, publishers and preachers worked to establish this domination. Among other things, they appropriated American history to themselves, even where deliberate lies were needed. Yankee historians claimed the South had not contributed during the Revolutionary War, but had only been saved by New England soldiers. Daniel Webster, the great defender of "the Union," while a guest in Charleston, orated about the many graves of New Eng-

land soldiers who had died fighting in the South. The trouble was, those graves did not exist. While many Southern volunteers had served in the North, no New England unit had ever served in the South, where all the important fighting took place after the first few years. Thus the Yankees tried to convert the successful War of Independence, which should have been a source of mutual celebration and unity for all Americans, into their exclusive property. Yet American history is told as the story of patriotic New England defenders of "the nation" versus wicked Southern sectionalists.

To a great extent the Yankee program of dominance succeeded in ways which last into the 21st century. Even today most Americans know all about how the country began with the "Pilgrim Fathers" at Plymouth and little about Jamestown (the site of the first lasting settlement and the real first Thanksgiving). They know all about Paul Revere and next to nothing of the vital history of the War of Independence in the South. Likewise, the Yankees made a claim on the "West." The Oregon Trail is still cited as a classic of the American frontier. It was by a wealthy tourist from Boston and is entirely about Yankee settlers in the Pacific Northwest, ignoring 95 per cent of the exciting story of the frontier, which was a predominantly Southern enterprise. By the 1850s, the migration of Yankees into New York and the upper Midwest had spread the campaign for cultural domination over much of the North. Only the hated South consistently ignored or openly disdained Yankee claims of superiority.

What aroused the Yankee's antipathy to Southern society was its opposition to his pride and his

profits, which in his mind were no more than his due as the only true American. The hostile critique of the South was a product of a self-absorbed New England culture that felt itself to be vastly superior to the rest of the United States but at the same time believed itself to be deprived of its rightful mastership of American destiny. It was in considerable measure a response by New England leadership to having been challenged and defeated by Jeffersonian and Jacksonian republicanism led by Southerners. The rise of the Republican party in the 1850s and its war of conquest against the South in the 1860s and 1870s were in a sense the belated assertion of Yankee supremacy, as many Northerners recognised at the time, with approval or disapproval. Resistance to New England dominion was explained, in true Puritan fashion, by the Southerner's evil nature — his lack of the Yankee virtues of self-discipline, order, morality, schooling and industry. Association with Southerners, white and black, at times seemed almost to put the Yankee in danger of personal contamination. One cannot help but detect in these people some intimations of envy and an attempt to cover up a feeling of inferiority.

This New England hatred of the South was fully developed before slavery became an issue and only marginally if at all reflected antislavery sentiment. At the time of the Revolutionary War, slaves were found in all 13 colonies and their numbers had actually been increasing in the North. The North did not have tobacco, sugar and cotton plantations, but slaves were to be found on the larger farms and as domestic servants in affluent families. Ten per cent of the population of New York City were slaves. The great Massachusetts heroes John Hancock and Sam Adams brought some of their black bondsmen with

them when they came to Philadelphia to sign the Declaration of Independence. Such Northern heroes of the Revolution as General Jacob Herkimer of New York and Frederick and Peter Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania, among many others, were slaveowners, as were a majority of the Northern delegates to the Philadelphia convention which drew up the Constitution of the United States. Into the early 1800s slavery was not only found in the Northern states, it was commonplace and unremarked.

The facts about slavery in the North have always been well-established. When Northerners suffer from shock at learning some of the facts, they only prove how self-deceptive they have been about their own history.

Timothy Dwight was the president of Yale University, a hater of Jefferson, and one of the "Connecticut Wits," a group of writers who flourished in the 1790s and considered themselves (with presumptuous inaccuracy) to be the founders of American literature. In a long poem celebrating the new America, he included a passage about the slaves in Connecticut (where at the time the percentage of slaveholding families in the population was equal to that of the South in 1860):

*But kindly fed, and clad, and treated he
Slides on thro' life, with more than
common glee.*

*For here mild manners good to all
impart,*

*And stamp with infamy the unfeeling
heart;*

*Here law, from vengeful rage, the slave
defends;*

*And here the gospel peace on earth
extends.*

*Oh, how happy to be a slave in
Connecticut!*

When John C. Calhoun and

other Southerners went to Yale to study in the early 19th century they did not move from a land of slavery to a land of freedom, as was later claimed. Dwight continued on in his lame verse to describe by contrast the horrors which were the lot of slaves elsewhere, with absurdly exaggerated descriptions of "cracking whips and dying groans," torture, cannibalism, and bashing out babies' brains before their grieving parents. (Though he seems to refer to the West Indies rather than the Southern States.) In the same poem Dwight manages to paint a pretty picture of slavery among his own and anticipates by several decades the lurid abolitionist shock descriptions of the South that began to be broadcast in the 1830s.

The typical New England attitude toward slavery before the rise of abolitionism in the 1830s was expressed by the elder statesman John Adams. In the early period of the Union he wrote the argument about slavery was a dispute about words, not substance. Adams said "that in some countries the laboring poor were called freemen, in others they were called slaves, but that the difference as to the state was imaginary only ... That the condition of the labouring poor in most countries, that of the fishermen particularly in the Northern States, is as abject as that of the slaves." Many years later Adams had not changed his opinion. In one of his last letters to Jefferson, during the Missouri controversy, which alarmed both of the elder statesmen, he wrote: "I have been so terrified with this phenomenon that I constantly said in former times to the Southern gentlemen, I must leave it to you. I will vote for no measure against your judgments."¹⁰ Despite this, the recent television docudrama about John Adams portrays the plain, manly patriot John Adams contending about slavery with a mincing fop from South Carolina. The Yan-

kee moral self-congratulation at the expense of Southerners never ends.

John Quincy Adams spent his last years doing exactly what his father had warned against — agitating relentlessly about slavery in the South and declaiming that an evil Southern "slave power" dominated the Union and threatened the values and interests of the decent people of the North. However, he did so only *AFTER* Southern opposition had made him into a bitter, beleaguered one-term president and he no longer had any hope of national preferment. (John Quincy Adams, by the way, was not in real life the cuddly teddy bear played by Anthony Hopkins in the movie *Amistad*. He was hateful and vindictive, as any glance at his portraits or his diary will show.)

The gradual disappearance of slavery (and black people) during the early 19th century by no means ended the Northern involvement with slavery. Northern investors were prominent among the owners of the very lucrative sugar plantations in Louisiana before the War, and others acquired the plantations of absent Confederates after the war began (one of the reasons Lincoln exempted southern Louisiana from the Emancipation Proclamation).

More importantly, New England shippers, right up to the War, were major players in the international slave trade, along with the Spanish and Portuguese. Bringing people from Africa for sale in the insatiable slave markets of Cuba and Brazil was illegal for American citizens but too profitable to resist — one voyage could make a shipper's fortune. Numerous wealthy New Englanders were invested in this business, including a close friend and political bankroller of that great defender of the North, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. After 1808, no slaves could be legally imported

into the United States. Southerners mostly were in favor of this. The black population was proliferating mightily by natural increase (a sign of good treatment) and there was no demand for importation despite the bringing of vast new lands into cultivation. Diverted from their American market, the Yankees continued the slave trade where there were still buyers. (Some of them also were able to cut into the British monopoly of the opium trade to China.)

The future Confederate General Henry A. Wise, while he was US Minister to Brazil, the future Confederate General James Conner, while he was US District Attorney in Charleston, and the future Confederate Navy hero John N. Maffitt, while he commanded a US vessel in the Caribbean, were zealous in interdicting and prosecuting Americans illegally engaged in the international slave trade, but found cases were usually transferred to the Northern point of origin of the voyage, where Northern juries refused to convict. And to pour yet more into the overflowing cup of Yankee hypocrisy, some New Englanders continued to own slave sugar plantations in Cuba even after emancipation in the United States.¹¹

Black people were not encouraged, before or after the War, to settle in the North or West. It has been shown the fabled Underground Railroad was mostly just that, a fable made up after the fact when it was safe to have been a brave antislavery worker. Sometimes the Underground Railroad involved slave stealing for resale rather than slave freeing.¹² On the other hand, right up to the war, Southern family slaves accompanied masters to such Northern resorts as Saratoga Springs, to Montreal, and to the Western gold and silver mines,

Continued on page 62

Those People

and returned home again. Though the number of black people in the "free States" was negligible, their segregated, impoverished, illiterate, disease- and crime-ridden communities (as shown plainly by the census) offered little attraction. In 1860 there were as many free black people living in the South as in the North, and many in the South were comfortably off, and some were rich and plantation owners themselves.¹³

Historians and commentators have created a vast literature and many theories about why the South has been so peculiar, so out-of-step and contrary in the history of the United States. Their unexamined assumption is that the North is and always has been the standard for "America" and normality. Southerners who fought to separate from "the greatest nation on earth" must surely be psychologically warped (the pseudo-scientific version), if not irredeemably evil (the righteous version). But as we noted earlier, Governor Seymour (and he was far from alone among thoughtful people in the North) considered the strange and evil thing to be that so many Northerners had come to support a government that would invade, loot, burn-out, and kill their Southern fellow citizens, destroy legitimate state governments, and rule a large part of the population by force, contrary to all previous American understanding and in violation of the most fundamental American principle — consent of the governed.

Indeed, the great untold story of American history is Yankee history. It is Yankee, not Southern, history that needs to be put under the microscope for further analysis.

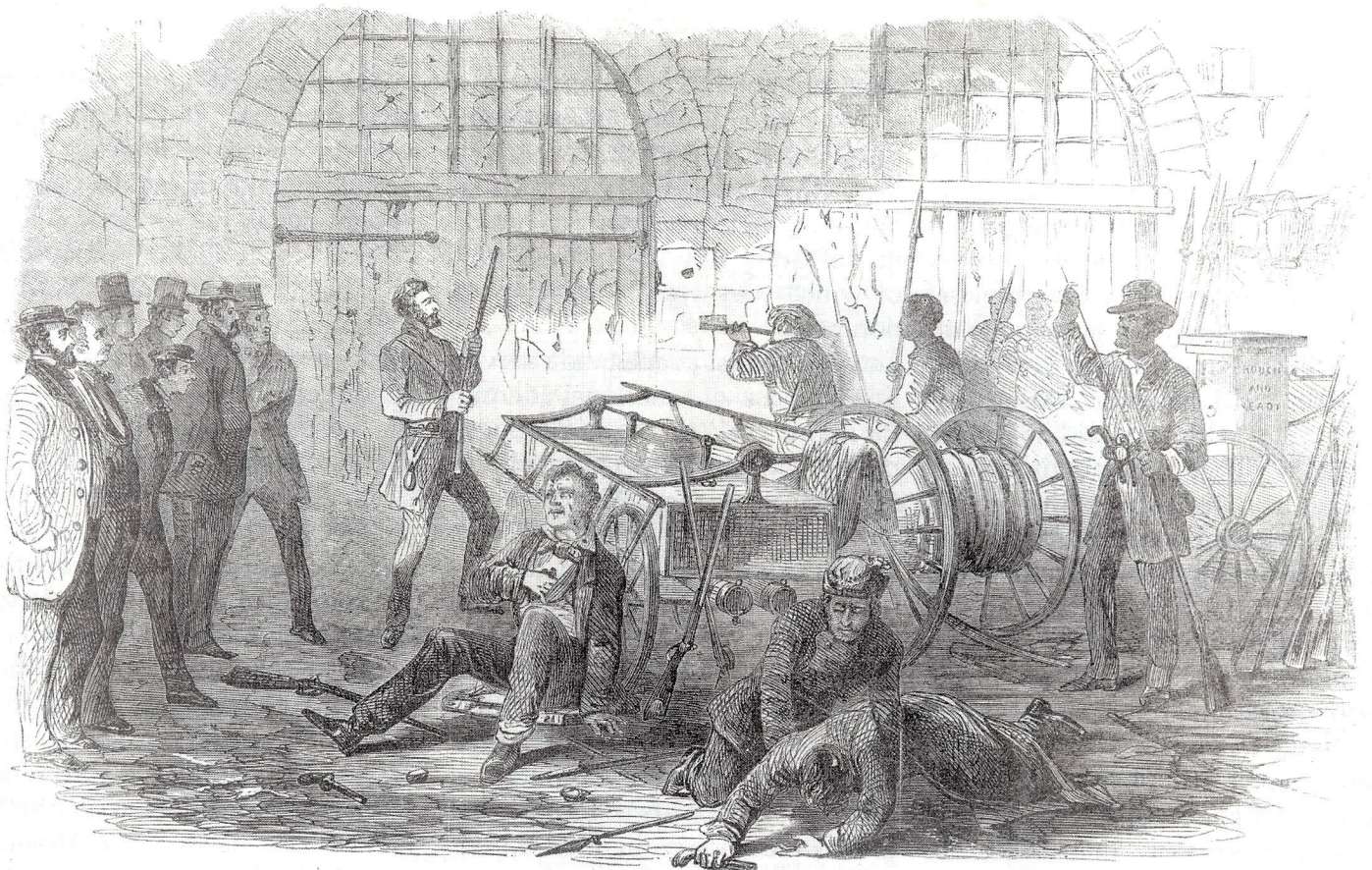
How did the post-Puritan North move from John Adams to John Brown and Abraham Lincoln? How to describe and explain of the vast changes that took place in Northern society between the Revolution and Lincoln's election? For Lincoln and his party to take power and inaugurate a war of conquest against the South was a new and revolutionary development even in terms of Northern history.

Most of the founders and prominent leaders of the Republican party in all the Northern States, other than Lincoln himself, were natives of New England: Horace Greeley and William Cullen Bryant, the leading Republican editors in New York City; Thaddeus Stevens, the leading Radical Republican of Pennsylvania (who, thanks to the tariff, made \$6,000 profit on every mile of railroad iron sold by his foundry); Senators Salmon P. Chase and Benjamin F. Wade in Ohio, Zachariah Chandler in Michigan, Lyman Trumbull in Illinois (along with Stephen A. Douglas, a Democrat who betrayed his many Southern supporters by urging Northern Democrats to back Lincoln's war). Many other Republican stalwarts were born in the Yankee-dominated region of upstate New York, known throughout the United States as "the Burnt-Over District" because it had been swept by so many waves of fanaticism.

An important ingredient in the formation of a new militant North was the decline of orthodox Christianity. The strict Calvinism under which New England had been founded had deteriorated constantly almost from the beginning. The Adamases were already Unitarians by the 1820s. In the 1830s ortho-

doxy was further shattered by new intellectual currents released by the French Revolution in Europe — especially newly-influential German philosophy and Biblical criticism. Emerson went from Massachusetts to Germany to study. There he learned that mankind was engaged in a dialectical process of progress that would lead eventually to the removal of all evils and contradictions from history — to the perfection of society. He returned home, resigned from the Congregational clergy, and announced that "whatever is old corrupts." This included the Christian sacraments, which were to be discarded as relics of barbarism. Yankees have always prided themselves on being trendy thinkers.

Soon he was declaring that "the American" (by which, of course, he meant the New Englander) was "a New Man," one destined to be the cutting edge of humanity's progress. The new doctrine made large inroads into the New England intelligentsia. When the breakdown of orthodox Christianity reached the less educated masses of Yankees, it took a different but parallel direction. "The Burnt-Over District," the upstate New York region settled by the overflow of the poorer population from the Yankee states, was struck by wave after wave of hysterical revivalism, as were similar areas of the Midwest. From this social turmoil, reminiscent in its effects of that which struck the United States in the 1960s, emerged a new post-millennial religion. America was a uniquely virtuous land with a uniquely special relationship with God. Indeed, America + Democracy = God. Such was the underlying assumption and often the declared



HARPER'S FERRY INSURRECTION—INTERIOR OF THE ENGINE-HOUSE, JUST BEFORE THE GATE IS BROKEN DOWN BY THE STORMING PARTY—COL. WASHINGTON AND HIS ASSOCIATES AS CAPTIVES, HELD BY BROWN AS HOSTAGES.

John Brown and his raiders at Harper's Ferry just before the end.

doctrine of sermons and political speeches from that day to this.¹⁴

Emerson's future state of perfection and God's plan for humanity had been conflated with America's chosenness. From the point of view of Christianity, the *American* belief is heresy. From the point of view of history it is nonsense. But it is powerful enough that it can make any politician quickly into a crowd-pleaser. A receptive public to this day applauds presidential declarations that America is the model of perfection to which all the world wishes, or should wish, to conform. That there is an American mission to spread the perfection of "democratic capitalism" to all humanity. The South was the first victim of such distorted Christian faith, but it has even made headway among Southerners during the 20th century of world wars.

The intensity of emotional and religious upheaval in the Burnt-

Over District was high. That small area of New York State, within the space of twenty years or so, saw Joseph Smith receive a new book of the Bible from the angel Moroni and found the polygamous Mormon church; William Miller begin the Seventh Day Adventists by predicting (inaccurately) the end of the world; the flourishing of spiritualism ("spirit rapping"); the free love colony of John Humphrey Noyes at Oneida; the first feminist convention held at Seneca Falls and John Brown, who was born in Connecticut, collecting accomplices and financial backers for his terrorist expeditions. (One of the financial backers in the Burnt-Over District was Gerritt Smith, one of the richest men in the country, who checked himself into a lunatic asylum when his connection with Brown was exposed. Other prominent Brown bankrollers took vacations in Canada).

For those inspired by the new faith, anything that stood in the way of American perfection must be stamped out. The problem to be attacked and eradicated was at various times identified as the Catholic church, the Masons, meat-eating, liquor, and marriage, all of which engendered earnest campaigns for their elimination from American life. Clearly, many Yankees were discontented people looking for something or someone to blame for the uneasiness they felt as their society suffered through religious breakdown, industrialisation with its accompanying dislocation and periodic unemployment, and a flood of non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Protestant immigrants. By the later 1830s the reformist frenzy had fixed upon slavery, by now limited to the Southern states and territories. It was already well-established that Southerners were an alien, lazy, violent people, lacking the sober vir-

tues of Northerners.

Most Americans, including many Southerners, had long thought slavery not an altogether good thing and wished it had never come to America. Nevertheless, most understood, as Jefferson put it, "we have the wolf by the ears," and no quick solution was to be had. (Lincoln himself said he would not know what to do about slavery even if he had the power, which he at first denied having). The abolitionism flooding forth from parts of the North in sermons, orations, newspapers, schoolbooks, slanderous petitions and pamphlets in the 1830s was something new and different. It had little interest in the welfare of black people, nor even in the bad effects of slavery on the American economy that had been argued (erroneously) by earlier critics. Slave-holding was a *SIN*, a blot on the perfection of what was now

regarded not as the Union but as a *nation* with a divine mission. Abolitionists preached vividly every evil they could imagine as a potential abuse by a slave-owner and was a fact of every day life in the South, of which they were completely ignorant.¹⁵

Abolitionist propaganda served the purpose of emotional identity for many Yankees and of pornography for others. The great abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher (brother of Mrs. Stowe of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), got rich and famous from staging mock slave auctions where young, nearly-white women were put on the block. He was later exposed for seducing young married women of his congregation, and was so involved in smuggling arms to abolitionists in Kansas that rifles were known there as "Beecher's Bibles."

Southerners found themselves regularly and publically denounced

in the harshest and vilest terms as barbarians, pirates, kidnappers, evil, tyrannical men lacking every American and Christian virtue. It is significant the orthodox clergy of the North looked unfavorably on the new currents. Northern Catholic and Episcopal bishops and Presbyterian theologians plainly denounced and warned against the hysterical propaganda of the abolitionists. Episcopal Bishop John Henry Hopkins of Vermont said in 1863, even as the War had raged on: "The South has done more than any people on earth for the African race." One could make several large books just discussing the Northern condemnation of what was deemed the fanatical and meddling spirit of New Englanders. A prominent New York Democratic writer hit the nail on the head: "The Abolitionists have throughout committed the fatal mistake of urging a purely moral cause by means, not only for-

power.

Meanwhile, let us give the last word to a Confederate soldier who was an unwilling guest of *those people* as a prisoner of war. When he got back home he wrote up his impressions for his hometown Georgia newspaper:

They believed their manners and customs more enlightened, their intelligence and culture immeasurably superior. Brimful of hypocritical cant and puritan ideas, they preach, pray and whine. The most parsimonious of wretches, they extoll charity ... the worst of dastards, they are the most selfish of men, they are the most blatant philanthropists, the blackest-hearted hypocrites, they are religious fanatics.

They are agitators and schemers, braggarts and deceivers, swindlers and extortioners, and yet pretend to Godliness, truth, purity and humanity. The shibboleth of their faith is, "The Union must and shall be preserved," and they hold on to this with all the peculiar obstinacy of their nature.

They say we are all benighted people, and are trying to pull down that which God himself built up. Many of these bigots express astonishment at finding the majority of our men could read and write, they have actually been educated to regard the Southern people as grossly illiterate, and little better than savages. The whole nation lives, breathes and prospers in delusions; and their chiefs control the spring of the social and political machine with masterly hands.

They are so entirely incongruous to our people that they and their descendants will ever be our natural enemies.¹⁹

This Confederate soldier's sentiments are the same as Jefferson's 60 years before, except now they cover the entire North and not just Massachusetts and Connecticut.

... (to be continued)

Endnotes

¹The proper name for the American war of 1861–1865 has always been a subject of argument. Compatriot Dr. Charles E. Pace of Greenville, North Carolina, in his study of the war (which I hope will soon be published) has put forward the term "War to Prevent Southern Independence." This is the most precisely accurate term that has ever been used. I have adopted it and other writers have followed suit.

²Public Record: Including *Speeches, Messages ... of Horatio Seymour* (New York: 1868). A rich collection of commentary on the era of the War by an antiwar Democrat. Seymour was actually a relative moderate in the ranks of Lincoln's Northern critics.

³Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, June 1, 1798.

⁴Richard M. Weaver, "Two Dialects," in *In Defense of Tradition: Collected Shorter Writings of Richard M. Weaver*, ed. Ted J. Smith III. (Indianapolis: 2000), pp. 720-748.

⁵Clyde Wilson, *Tiger's Meat: William Gilmore Simms and the History of the Revolution, Simms Review*, vol 8 (2000), pp. 22-31.

⁶Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia, SC: 2000); Kelly J. O'Grady, *Clear the Confederate Way!* (Mason City, Iowa: 1999).

⁷Compatriot Dr. James E. Kibler, emeritus professor of English at the University of Georgia, is the leader of this movement. See also Clyde Wilson, *Shakespeare Spoke Southern*, www.abbeyvilleinstitute.org.

⁸Noah Webster's adventures in the South are fully recounted in Harry R. Warfel, ed., *Letters of Noah Webster* (New York: 1953), and in Warfel, *Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America* (New York: 1936).

⁹See Harlow W. Sheidley, *Sectional Nationalism: Massachusetts Conservative Leaders and the Transformation of America* (Boston: 1998).

¹⁰Jefferson in his autobiography summarized Adams's comments about the 3/5ths compromise in the Constitution.

The later remarks in John Ad-

ams to Thomas Jefferson, February 3, 1821.

¹¹Clyde Wilson, "Spielberg's Amistad," in Wilson, *Defending Dixie* (Columbia, SC: 2006), pp. 179-183.

¹²Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington, KY: 1996). The Underground Railroad has spawned enough recent literature to fill a small library, much of it directed at children and produced by the US government, although it is an insignificant portion of the history of slavery in the US.

¹³Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: 1995);

Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slaveowners in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: 1994);

Gary B. Mills, *The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color* (Baton Rouge: 1977).

¹⁴Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: 1968).

¹⁵Avery O. Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (Chicago: 1966), chapters 1-7.

¹⁶This statement was made by John O'Sullivan of New York, editor of *The Democratic Review* and one of the most prominent spokesmen of the Democratic Party during the 1840s and 1850s. He could not stomach Lincoln's war against the South and was about to leave for Europe, where he defended the Confederacy. A number of Northerners went to Europe for the same reason. The painter James McNeill Whistler was one.

¹⁷Charles Adams, *Slavery, Secession, and Civil War: Views from the United Kingdom and Europe, 1856-1865* (Lanham, MD: 2007); an invaluable collection.

¹⁸See Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York: 2009); William Marvel, *Mr. Lincoln Goes to War* (Boston: 2006).

¹⁹Published in the Smyrna, Georgia, *Bugle Call* in 1864 and widely reprinted in Southern papers.

