12 THE LAST DAYS OF THE UNION

I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm, tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen. O but tell me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD!

These words were penned by William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of *The Liberator*, a journal based in Boston. In his younger days, Garrison had been a Temperance crusader, but when he met Benjamin Lundy, his interest was turned toward a new cause—antislavery. In 1815, Lundy had founded an antislavery society. In 1829, Garrison (then in his mid-twenties) joined Lundy in another of his antislavery endeavors, the Baltimore-based journal, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*.

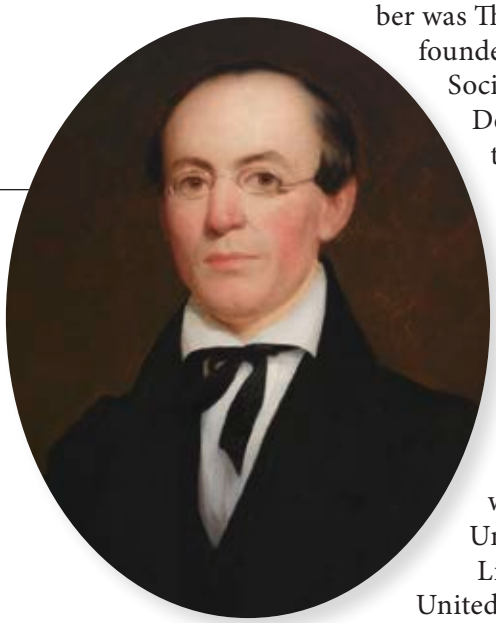
Garrison and Lundy, however, remained partners only a short time; for though they both agreed that slavery had to go, they differed on how this was to be done. Lundy was a gradualist; that is, he thought slavery should be abolished, but only slowly, over time, and that the emancipated slaves should be settled somewhere outside the United States. Garrison, however, came to support immediate emancipation and contended that ex-slaves should be treated as full and equal citizens of the United States. To promote these ideas (which most Americans both South and North thought very radical), Garrison founded *The Liberator*.

The Battle over Slavery

Garrison was uncompromising in his attacks on what had become known as the "slaveocracy"—the power slave owners held both in government and society. For Garrison, the term slaveocracy included both the North and the South, for both sections, he said, were responsible for slavery. But Garrison's harshest words were reserved for the slaveholders themselves. And this language could be so harsh that southerners came to fear that it might inspire a slave rebellion—a peril southerners had come to fear more than any other.

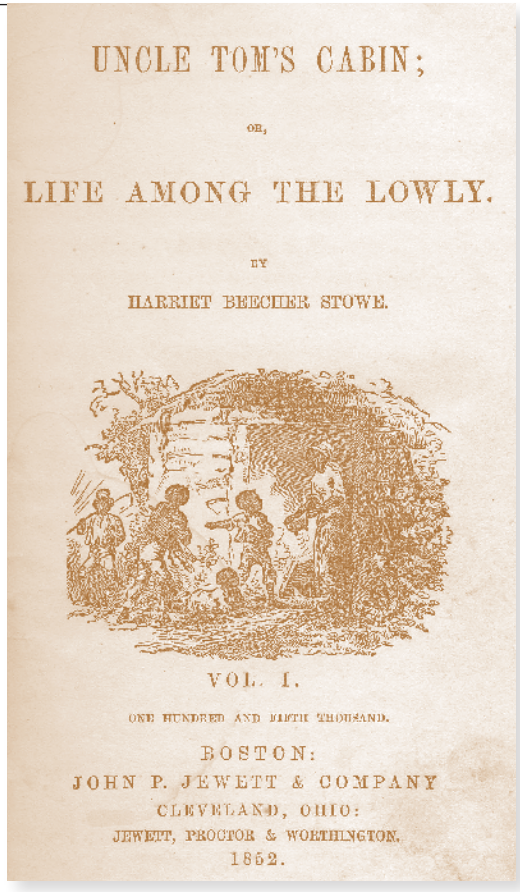
abolition: the act of abolishing; in the sense used in this chapter, the abolishing of slavery

Garrison's uncompromising stance on slavery came to be known as **abolition**. But, as we have seen in the case of Benjamin Lundy, not every antislavery proponent favored immediate emancipation—or citizenship for all blacks. These folk were called simply "antislavery," and in their number was Theodore Dwight Weld of Connecticut, a founder (in 1833) of the American Antislavery Society. The Society based its ideas on the Declaration of Independence and "the truths of divine revelation," but held that, since the Constitution did not give the federal government the authority to interfere with slavery in the states, moral persuasion was the only path to take in urging the abolition of slavery. Nevertheless, the Society held that all laws that protected slavery were null and void. The Society's journal, *The Emancipator*, became the most widely-read antislavery journal in the United States.



William Lloyd Garrison in the 1840s

Like other reform movements in the United States, antislavery attracted a number of women to its ranks. Among these were Angelina Grimké and her sister, Sarah. The daughters of a South Carolina judge, the Grimké sisters had grown up in the South and seen slavery firsthand. Angelina was involved in the women's rights movement as well—a cause she saw as intimately tied up with antislavery. Another prominent antislavery woman was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who in 1852 published a novel that greatly stirred up the slavery controversy by its unfavorable depiction of slave life in the South. Southerners roundly criticized this book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, saying Stowe (who had never visited the South) could not possibly understand the South's "peculiar institution."


UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;

OR,

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

VOL. I.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH THOUSAND.

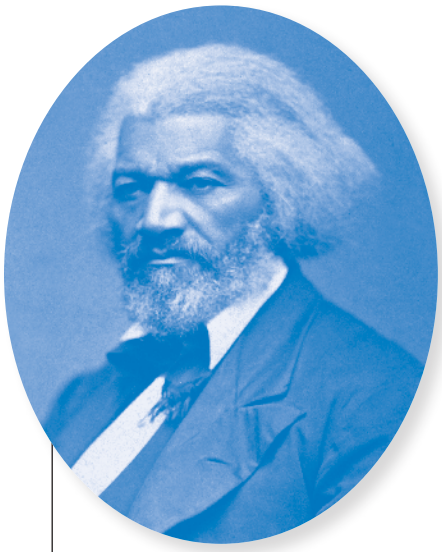
BOSTON:
JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY
CLEVELAND, OHIO:
JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.
1852.

Title page of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Black men and women played important roles in both the antislavery movement and abolitionism. Among the most prominent was Frederick Douglass, who had been a slave in Maryland but escaped to freedom. Douglass, who had been

taught to read and write, was an eloquent speaker and traveled the antislavery speaking circuit. His book, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, has become an American classic.

Isabella Baumfree had been a slave in New York until that state abolished slavery. Calling herself Sojourner Truth, she wandered from place to place, preaching against the evils of slavery—as she claimed God had told her to do. Both she and Frederick Douglass were devout Christians and drew from Christian teaching in their fight against slavery.



Frederick Douglass



Isabella Baumfree, "Sojourner Truth"



Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman, who, like Douglass, had escaped from slavery, took the route of direct action against slavery. After her escape to the North in 1849, Tubman returned to the South to rescue her family from slavery. In subsequent years, she went back and forth between the free and slave states, leading some 300 slaves into freedom. Tubman was one of the "conductors" on what became known as the "Underground Railroad"—a system whereby escaping slaves were given guidance and refuge in their flight to freedom.

Some antislavery people paid for their convictions with their lives. Among these was Elijah Lovejoy, who established a printing press in Alton, Illinois, to publish antislavery articles. The people of Alton, however, opposed Lovejoy's antislavery activities. Twice they destroyed printing presses he owned. In 1837, after he had established a third press, a mob attacked the building that housed it. In this attack, Lovejoy was shot to death. Lovejoy's death had the opposite effect to what the mob probably intended. It attracted even more people to the antislavery cause. By 1840, antislavery societies numbered about 150,000 members.

The South Reacts

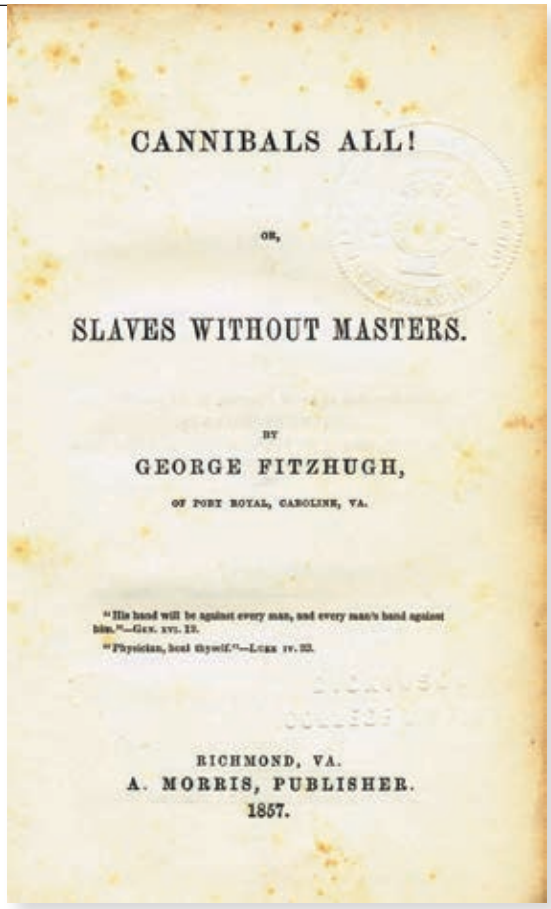
If Garrison had hoped that his attacks on slavery—and slaveholders—would influence southern opinion, he was right. But his attacks did not influence it in the way he may have hoped. The writings of Garrison and other antislavery and abolitionist writers painted the South in the darkest colors. Northerners began to think of the South as a region of dark crime and cruelty. And, of course, such a portrayal

of the South offended southerners—though, probably, at times, it pricked their consciences as well.

In response to attacks, southerners penned defenses of their "peculiar institution." They contended that the Bible nowhere condemns slavery—and that St. Paul himself told slaves to obey their masters. Others, like John C. Calhoun, argued that a civilization always needs a subject population; he even called slavery "the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world."

indictment: in law, a formal accusation of wrong-doing

A defense of slavery—and a powerful **indictment** of the North—was the Virginian, George Fitzhugh's volume, *Cannibals All!* In this work, Fitzhugh argued that both North and South were engaged in the slave trade; only, in the North, the slave was the poor wage earner who must "take care of himself and family out of the pittance which skill or capital have allowed [him] to retain." At least, said Fitzhugh, the southern slaveholder will continue to care for his slaves, even when they are ill or too old to work, while the northern factory owner and capitalist will simply turn such workers out to care for themselves. "[U]nder the delusive name of liberty," wrote Fitzhugh to Northerners, "you work him 'from morn to dewy eve'—from infancy to old age—then turn him out to starve. You treat your horses and hounds better. . ."


CANNIBALS ALL!

OR,

SLAVES WITHOUT MASTERS.

BY

GEORGE FITZHUGH,

OF PORT royal, CAROLINE, VA.

"His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."—Gen. xvi. 12.

"Physician, heal thyself."—Luke iv. 23.

RICHMOND, VA.
A. MORRIS, PUBLISHER.
1857.

Title page from Fitzhugh's work, *Cannibals All!* The quotations from Scripture read: "His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Genesis 16:12) and "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23).

Southern representatives and senators carried on a legislative battle against abolitionists, who had been sending petitions against slavery to Congress. In 1836, southerners in Congress convinced other representatives to "table" such petitions—that is, ignore them altogether. Some northern congressmen, led by John Quincy Adams (then a representative from Massachusetts), condemned these "gag resolutions" (as they came to be called) as a violation of citizens' constitutional rights to freedom of speech and petition. It was not until 1844 that Adams was able finally to get them repealed.

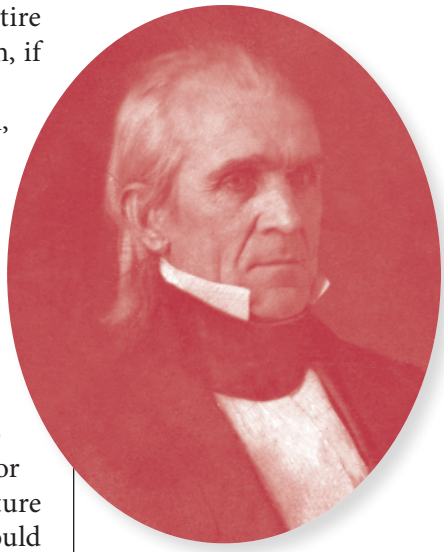
Southern fears over the future of slavery coalesced around the question of what should be done with the new territories the United States had seized from Mexico. Should they be open to slavery or not? Congressman David Wilmot of Pennsylvania proposed that all new territories be closed to slavery. Southerners objected, saying that their section had equal rights with the North to the territories; and they feared that if the territories forbade slavery, all the new states carved from them would be free and would ally with the North against the South. The North already held the majority of seats in the House of Representatives, while the

Senate was equally split between North and South. The Senate, and thus, the entire federal government, so southerners argued, would be controlled by the North, if Wilmot's proposal were adopted.

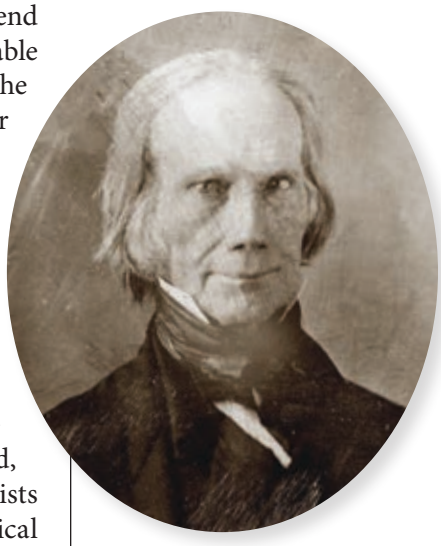
President Polk, who, though a New Englander, was friendly to the South, suggested that a better plan than Wilmot's would be to extend the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific. But Polk left office in 1849, and the new president, Zachary "Old Rough and Ready" Taylor, though a Virginian, was quite eager to admit California into the union as a free state. The new Congress, however, was bitterly divided over such a plan.

It was Senator Henry Clay who, in January 1850, came up with a compromise plan that could placate both sides. California, he said, should be admitted as a free state, while slave owners should be allowed to settle in the territories of New Mexico and Utah. (Oregon was already a free territory.) To please both slaveholders and antislavery folks, Clay added two more points. For southerners, he offered a law that would make it easier for slave owners to capture escaped slaves in the North. For antislavery people, Clay said that slavery would be abolished in the District of Columbia.

Clay's compromise bill, however, pleased neither side. Southerners objected that it did not treat the southern states as equal members of the union. Antislavery people contended that, if slavery is wrong, it should not be allowed to extend anywhere. Still, with the help of Illinois' Senator Stephen Douglas, Clay was able to push his compromise through Congress. This Compromise of 1850 was the last of its kind between North and South. It bandaged the union together for another ten years.



President James K. Polk



Henry Clay

Slavery and Religion

What was the reaction of religious believers, particularly Christians, to slavery?

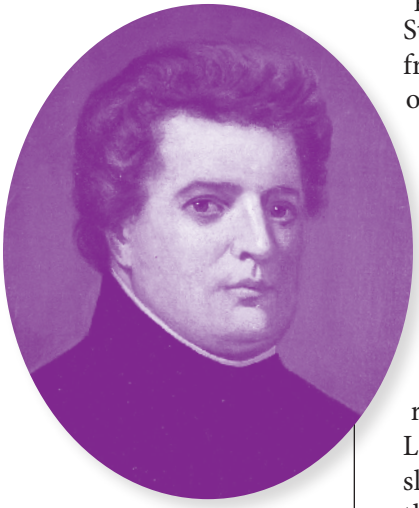
It might come as a surprise to us, but the reaction of most religious groups in the United States to slavery was tepid, at best. Some Christians were quite opposed to slavery; but most were either neutral or, as many in the South did, they defended slavery. For instance, both Congregationalists and Methodists rejected immediate emancipation. Presbyterians said slavery was merely a political issue, not a moral one; later, they would split into northern and southern branches over the question. Episcopalians and Lutherans also took a neutral stance.

Most American Catholics, too, even if they thought slavery an evil, looked upon emancipation as merely a political issue. Catholic theologians taught it was immoral to enslave a free man; but, they said, one is not necessarily bound to abolish an existing condition of slavery or to free people who were born into slavery, if doing so would lead to greater evils and seriously harm the common good. A master, however, had to treat his slaves humanely, not forbid them to marry, not divide their families, nor deprive them of the benefits of religion. Most Catholics in the United States thought immediate emancipation would lead to great social evils.

Though by the 1850s, the majority of American Catholics had little or nothing to do with slavery, this was not always so. Before the massive Irish and large-scale German immigration into the U.S., most Catholics lived in the South. Some Maryland Catholics, in particular, owned slaves to work their tobacco farms and plantations—among them the Carrolls, who gave the United States the patriot,

Charles Carroll, and American Catholics their first bishop, John Carroll. Even the Jesuits in Maryland owned slaves, as did the Ursuline sisters in New Orleans as well as some bishops. The Dominicans in Kentucky used slave labor on their lands to free them for their pastoral work of preaching and teaching.

Though Catholic religious orders, priests, and bishops were noted for their kindness to their slaves, some did engage in the buying and selling of their slave "property." In an 1807 letter, the founder of the Dominican order in the United States, Edward Fenwick, speaks of his attempt to sell a boy slave he had inherited from his family. Fenwick, however, notes that he did not sell the boy because the only way he could get a good price for him was if he sold him "to any heretic" or "sent [him] down the river." In other words, Fenwick would not sell a Catholic slave to a non-Catholic or into the Deep South, where slavery was very hard and often brutal. That, he said, he thought "unlawful to do." Fenwick may have had a change of heart about slavery after he became the first bishop of Cincinnati, Ohio. In an 1823 letter, he writes that Ohio was superior to Kentucky in part because "it is a free territory, not tolerating the slavery of Negroes."



Father Thomas F. Mulledy, S.J.

The head of the Maryland Jesuit Province, Thomas F. Mulledy, however, was not so conscientious. In 1838, to save Georgetown College from financial ruin, he sold 272 slaves for $115,000 (about $3 million today) to two planters in Louisiana. The sale split family members, and Mulledy could not assure that these slaves would be able to continue to practice their Catholic religion. This violated the terms Mulledy's Jesuit superiors in Rome laid down for him when they had approved the sale, and they punished him by removing him from the United States for several years.

The violations of Catholic teaching on slavery by both clergy and laity led Pope Gregory XVI in 1839 to issue an apostolic letter, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, condemning the slave trade. He wrote:

> *We . . . do vehemently admonish and adjure in the Lord all believers in Christ, of whatsoever condition, that no one hereafter may dare unjustly to molest Indians, Negroes, or other men of this sort; or to spoil them of their goods; or to reduce them to slavery; or to extend help or favor to others who perpetrate such things against them; or to exercise that inhuman trade by which Negroes, as if they were not men, but mere animals, however reduced into slavery, are, without any distinction, contrary to the laws of justice and humanity, bought, sold, and doomed sometimes to the most severe and exhausting labors; and, moreover, the hope of gain being by that trade proposed to the first captors of the Negroes, dissensions, also, and as it were, perpetual wars are fomented in their countries.*



Pope Gregory XVI

This was not the first condemnation of slavery and the slave trade by a pope. In 1435, Pope Eugene IV had condemned enslaving the black people of the Canary Islands, and in 1537, Pope Paul III condemned enslaving Indians. Between 1591 and 1741, Popes Gregory XIV, Urban VIII, and Benedict XIV condemned slavery—and in 1815, Pope Pius VII tried to convince the European countries meeting in the Congress of Vienna to outlaw slavery.

Though these papal statements were in line with what Catholic tradition had always said about slavery—that it is a **material evil** resulting from sin—they did not go so far as to condemn the theological opinion

spoil: to despoil or rob
material evil: an evil other than a moral evil or sin. Material evils include sickness, poverty, natural disasters, hunger, and the like. Material evils may arise from moral evils—poverty, for instance, may arise from oppression and greed—but they are not themselves immoral.

of the time that an existing condition of slavery was not necessarily immoral. Several American bishops wanted to see an abolition of slavery; but they thought it could not be done immediately without serious harm to the common good and even to the slaves themselves. However, two southern bishops—Augustin Verot of Savannah, Georgia and, later, Florida, and Augustus Martin of Natchitoches, Louisiana—defended the institution of black slavery in the United States.

Bishop Verot was blunt in his defense of slavery. In *A Tract for the Times: Slavery and Abolitionism*, he condemned the "unjust, iniquitous, unscriptural, and unreasonable" assertions of abolitionists "who brand Slavery as a moral evil, and crime against God, religion, humanity, and society." On the contrary, said Verot, slavery "is found to have received the **sanction** of God, of the Church, and of Society of all kinds, and in all governments." Slavery, he said, can be "legitimate, lawful, approved by all laws, and consistent with practical religion and true holiness of life in masters"—who must, however, treat their slaves with justice.

In a pastoral letter he issued in 1861, Bishop Martin went so far as to say that the original enslavement of Africans by Europeans was for the Africans' own good. The enslavement of black Africans, he said, was by the "manifest will of God" because it saved them from vices that they had as "children of the race of Canaan." Martin's language suggested that he thought black Africans an inferior race.

However, unlike, it seems, Verot's tract, Martin's letter attracted the attention of Rome. In 1864, the Dominican Vincenzo Maria Gatti of the Roman **Congregation of the Index**, penned a condemnation of Martin's letter. In no way, said Gatti, are Black Africans naturally inferior to Europeans. Moreover, the "mistake" in Martin's letter, the Dominican declared, "favors the preservation of slavery in the Southern States in opposition to the will of the Sovereign Pontiffs who . . . condemned not only the slave trade but slavery itself." Gatti thus interpreted Pope Gregory XVI's *In Supremo Apostolatus* as a condemnation of more than just the slave trade, but of the very institution of slavery itself. Gatti's condemnation of Bishop Martin's pastoral letter received the approval of the reigning pontiff, Pope Pius IX.



Bishop Augustus Martin

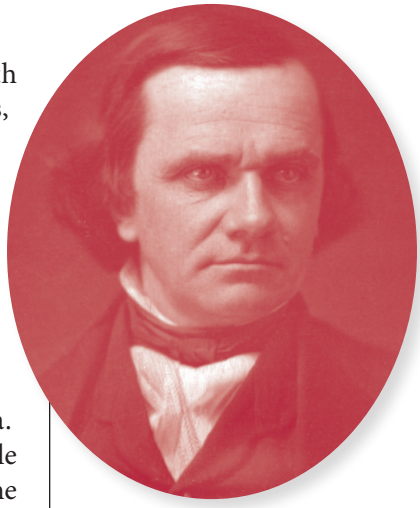
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Congregation of the Index: an official department of the Church that examined books and other published materials to see if they agreed with Catholic teaching

The Railroad to Disunity

Slavery was not the only issue to divide North and South. Another had to do with a railroad. By the mid-1850s, railroads had been built all over the eastern states, especially in the North—but now Americans wanted to build a transcontinental railroad to connect the eastern states with far-off California. The question was, where to build it?

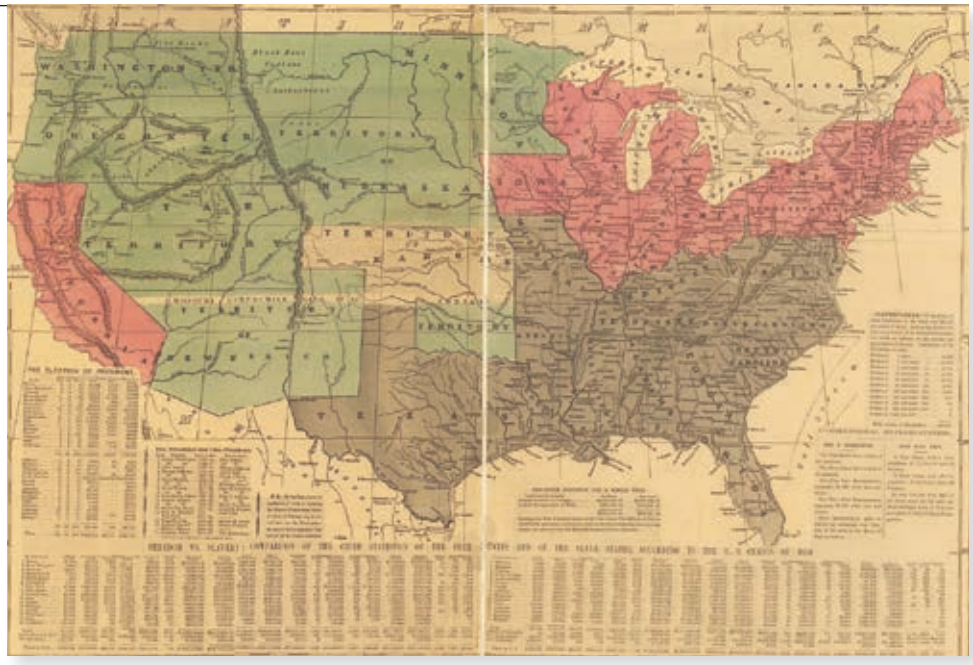
Jefferson Davis, a powerful politician from Mississippi, was the secretary of war for the new president, Franklin Pierce (elected in 1852). Davis, an owner of a large plantation with many slaves, dreamed of a great southern empire that would be built on slavery. New Mexico, he thought, would form part of this empire, and thus he favored a transcontinental railroad that would begin in New Orleans and run through Texas and New Mexico, and on into California. Davis' opponent was Illinois' senator, Stephen Arnold Douglas (called the "Little Giant" for his small stature but mighty political power). Douglas wanted the railroad to begin in St. Louis, Missouri and cross the central part of the country, with a terminus in San Francisco. This route, however, would favor the North



Stephen Douglas

and so would not attract southern supporters in Congress. It had an added disadvantage: the Nebraska territory, through which the central route would pass, was not organized—that is, it did not have a territorial government, a prerequisite for such a massive project as a railroad. According to the Missouri Compromise, an organized Nebraska Territory would be a free Nebraska Territory—something to which, Douglas knew, southerners in Congress would object.

To clear the way for his central route by overcoming southern objections to it, Douglas in 1854 introduced a bill into Congress that would divide the Nebraska Territory in two—Kansas and Nebraska. The bill proposed that the territories would be organized without reference to slavery at all. Those who settled the territories would exercise "popular sovereignty" over the slave question—that is, the settlers themselves would decide whether the territories would admit slavery or not.



A "Political Map of the United States," 1854. The map states it was "designed to exhibit the comparative area of the Free and Slave States and the territory open to slavery or freedom by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise." Free states are in red; slave states, in gray. The territories are green, except for Kansas, which appears as white. The Missouri Compromise line runs in white from the southern border of Kansas westward to California.

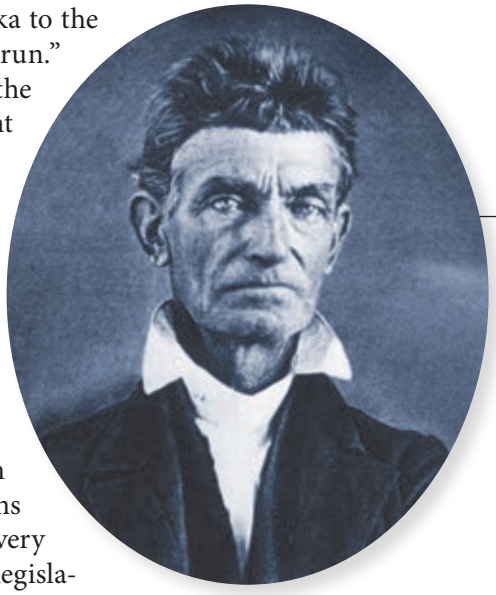
Southerners in Congress could support such a plan as "popular sovereignty," for in their minds it placed southerners on an equal footing with northerners in settling any U.S. territory. Northerners, however, opposed it because it basically repealed the Missouri Compromise. And, if this was not bad enough, Douglas had joined forces with a Kentucky senator to introduce a bill that specifically repealed that compromise. The battle over Douglas' bill was hot and intense; but, in the end, Douglas' political might broke through all opposition. On May 25, 1854, Congress approved the Kansas-Nebraska Act; five days later, President Pierce signed it into law.

Yet, despite his victory in Congress, Douglas would not live to see even the beginnings of the transcontinental railroad he so wanted. Unwittingly, he had put in motion events that would reduce the railroad issue to insignificance, for they would tear at the weakening bonds of the union and propel the country towards the brink of dissolution, and beyond.

Bleeding Kansas

Even before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, proslavery southerners had been moving from Missouri into Kansas—and this despite the fact that the federal

government had guaranteed Kansas and Nebraska to the Indians for "as long as grass shall grow and water run." But with the passage of the act, settlers from the Northeast, with help from antislavery emigrant aid societies, also began to pour into Kansas, to assure that it would be a free, not a slave, territory. The presence of these "free-soilers," as they were called, in a territory occupied also by pro-slavery settlers, soon led to violence.



John Brown, a free-soiler in the Kansas territory who led violent reprisals for the violence of pro-slavery raiders

To organize the Kansas territory, settlers there had to form a territorial government. Because of the zealous efforts of emigrant aid societies, the majority of settlers in Kansas were now free-soilers. To prevent Kansas from becoming a free territory, pro-slavery Missourians crossed the border and voted to elect a pro-slavery majority in the first elections for the territorial legislature. Free-soil Kansas settlers, refusing to accept this result, elected an antislavery legislature—giving Kansas two competing governments. Free-soilers then took up arms to defend themselves from armed pro-slavery raiders both within Kansas and from without. Joined in bands called Jayhawkers, free-soilers clashed in bloody struggles with pro-slavery "border ruffians" for the control of Kansas.

Thus, Kansas erupted into a small civil war. Both sides were brutal and cold-blooded, committing robberies and murders, burning down settlements and pillaging property. Easterners who heard of the struggle were horrified. They did not know how the violence in "Bleeding Kansas" would end, or what it all portended for the future of the United States.

An Antislavery Party

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act inspired a renewed opposition to slavery among people in the North. Throughout the North, voices were calling for state conventions to find ways to stop the spread of slavery. One such convention in Massachusetts worked up a platform for a new political party, called the Republican Party. Among its planks, the Republican platform laid down the following principles: "that no man can own another man . . . that slavery must be prohibited in the territories . . . that all new States must be Free States."

The **mid-term elections** in 1854 showed this new Republican Party that the Democrats were not invincible. Though itself only winning 13 seats in the House of Representatives, the Republicans along with the American "Know-Nothing" Party (which took 51 seats) and other opposition parties had secured a total of 151 seats. This left the Democrats only a minority of 83 seats in the House of Representatives.

mid-term election: in the United States, an election held two years after one presidential election and two years before another. In the mid-term, every member of the House of Representatives and one-third of the members of the Senate are up for election.

The apparent weakness of the Democratic Party encouraged the Republicans to think that, in two years, they might be able to win the presidency. In their convention in 1856, Republicans nominated John C. Frémont as their presidential candidate—and he adopted the campaign slogan, "Free soil, free speech, and Frémont." Throughout the North, zealous Republicans campaigned for Frémont—including a 47-year-old lawyer from Springfield, Illinois, named Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had briefly been a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, but had lost his seat because of his public opposition to the Mexican-American War. Now, nearly



The Great Republican Reform Party cartoon. An anti-Fremont satire. Representatives of various perceived radical groups approach Frémont, who makes them this promise: "You shall have what you desire, and be sure that the glorious Principles of Popery, Fourierism, Free Love, Woman's Rights, the Maine Law [i.e. temperance], and above all the Equality of our Colored brethren, shall be maintained; If I get the Presidential Chair."

ten years later, he was stumping for Frémont and for the freedom principle declared in the Declaration of Independence. And, he had his sights set on the Illinois election of 1858, where he hoped to win Stephen Douglas' senate seat.

The Democratic candidate in 1856 was James Buchanan, who, with his party, bitterly lashed out at the "Black Republicans," as their critics called them. The Republicans, Democrats said, were fomenting disunion—and Democrats used quotes from Republican speeches to show that Republicans were expecting a slave rebellion in the South. In the end, Buchanan and the Democrats' rhetoric won the day. Buchanan took every slave state (except Maryland, which went for the Know-Nothing candidate, Millard Fillmore) and every northern state, except Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana, winning 174 electoral votes to Frémont's 114. But the popular vote was closer—1,836,000 for Buchanan to 1,342,000 for Frémont. If Frémont had taken every northern state, he could have won the election—even if he had not won a single southern state. For southerners, this demonstrated the unwelcome possibility that the North could come to control not only the House of Representatives but the presidency as well. If the South in turn lost control of the Senate, it could be left entirely at the mercy of the North and its interests.

Dred Scott

Many Americans, both north and south, were deeply worried about the growing rancor between the two sections. One of these was the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Roger Taney. He with four of his associate justices (all from the South) saw how the great compromises forged by Congress had failed to restore unity to the country. Taney thought that where Congress had failed, the Supreme Court might succeed.

He soon found the court case to test his hunch. Dred Scott, a slave, had made the claim that since his former master, Dr. John Emerson, had brought him to live for an extended period at a military post in a free territory, he was a free man. Scott's attorney brought this claim before a judge in Missouri, who ruled that Scott was indeed free on account of the Missouri Compromise. The Missouri Supreme Court, however, decided after six years that Scott was still a slave. Scott's

lawyer then appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which agreed to hear the case in 1856.

After a year of deliberation, a majority of the Supreme Court ruled against Scott. Writing the opinion for the majority, Chief Justice Taney declared that no black man could ever be a citizen of the United States and that when the Declaration of Independence said that "all men are created equal," it did not include blacks. Moreover, said Taney, a slave is property, and the Constitution protects a man's possession of his property. Thus, Taney said, Congress could not keep slave owners from taking their "property" into free territories. No matter where he was, a slave remained a slave, said Taney.



Dred Scott

Taney may have thought his decision in the Dred Scott case would help heal the union, but he was wrong. Since he ruled that not even Congress had the power to keep slaves out of the territories, he made any compromise like the Missouri Compromise impossible. The decision, too, overturned Stephen Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska Act; for if Congress could not forbid slavery in a territory, neither could the "popular sovereignty" of a territory's citizens. Taney's decision, of course, pleased many southerners, who thought that at last they were being treated as equal citizens of the union; but it angered northerners, whether antislavery or not. To their mind, the Dred Scott decision was nothing but a power grab by the Supreme Court for the sake of the slave power of the South.

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates



Abraham Lincoln

The mid-term elections for the U.S. Senate in Illinois featured some of the most remarkable political oratory in United States history. The Democratic candidate, Stephen Douglas, had accepted the Republican candidate's invitation to a series of public debates. Douglas' Republican rival was the former congressman, Abraham Lincoln.

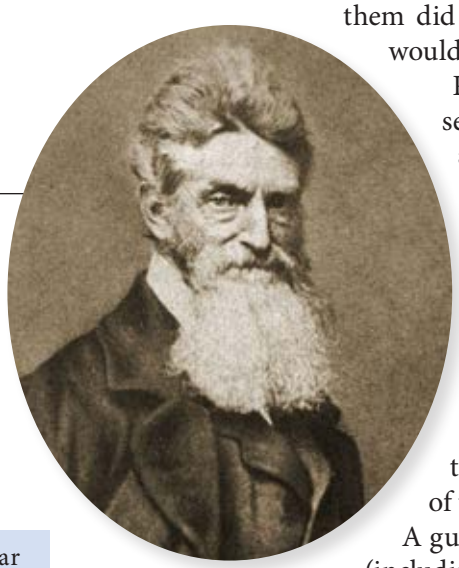
In the debates, Douglas declared that the United States government "was made by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity"—not for black people and their offspring. He accused Lincoln of favoring complete equality between blacks and whites and of an intent to make black people citizens. Lincoln denied that he thought blacks and whites are equal in every way; but, he said, "in the right to eat the bread without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, [the black man] is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man."

The debates turned on the question of slavery in the territories. Douglas' "popular sovereignty" policy had a certain practical rationale to it; for it was unlikely, even in the southwestern territories of New Mexico and Arizona, that slavery would ever take hold. Popular sovereignty was a practical way of pleasing the South without really expanding slave territory in any way. Still, for Lincoln, the slavery question was not primarily practical; it was moral. Slavery should be forbidden in the territories, he said, because "it is a moral, a social and political wrong."

Lincoln did not call for the immediate abolition of slavery; but he appealed to the doctrine of human "inalienable rights" found in the Declaration of Independence. If all men are created equal, Lincoln contended, then the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness belong to everyone, no matter his or her race. Yet, despite this high moral tone (or because of it), Lincoln lost the senatorial race to Douglas. On the other hand, by his rhetoric he established for himself a prominent place in the western Republican Party and a name and reputation among Republicans in the East—all of which would stand him in good stead when he contended for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860.

Standoff at Harper's Ferry

Among the anti-slavery settlers who had come to Kansas and had shed blood for Free Soil in the territory was an old abolitionist by the name of John Brown. In 1859, however, Brown was in Canada, meeting with white and black abolitionists, laying out his plan for a violent revolution to end slavery in the United States once and for all. Though some of the abolitionists backed Brown's plan, one amongst them did not. This was Frederick Douglass, who said he would have no part in it.



John Brown in 1859

Returning to the United States, Brown and his sons settled on a farm near Harper's Ferry, Virginia—a town with a federal arsenal and a gun factory. On the night of October 16, 1859, Brown, with his sons and some others, seized the arsenal. Brown freed all the slaves in Harper's Ferry, and 50 of these joined Brown and his men, who took cover in a railroad **engine house**.

Brown hoped that the seizure of the arsenal would ignite a slave rebellion that would spread from Harper's Ferry to all of Virginia, and then to the entire South. But the next morning, members of the Virginia militia surrounded the engine house. A gunfight ensued in which, one by one, Brown's men (including two of his sons) fell dead around him. Still, Brown would not surrender. He fought on into the night.

engine house: a large, circular building used for switching locomotives from one track to another

By morning, all was over. United States marines, commanded by the Virginian, Colonel Robert Edward Lee, took Brown and three others prisoner. Brown was sent to Charles Town, Virginia, where he was convicted of treason. He was executed by hanging on December 2, 1859.

No slave rebellion followed Brown's capture or execution. What did follow was fear and panic among southerners, who had long lived in terror of slave revolt. That some abolitionists praised Brown only increased southern fear and loathing of the antislavery cause, and of the North. Many in the South were thinking that they would only be safe if their states seceded from the union.

The Election That Divided the Nation

The Democratic Party mirrored the divisions in the nation. When, in 1860, Democrats gathered in Charleston, South Carolina for the convention where they would nominate their candidate for president, they were split between those who wanted the party to adopt an extreme, pro-slavery platform and those who opposed it. When the convention rejected a pro-slavery plank, delegates from the eight cotton states withdrew, while the rest of the delegates adjourned to Baltimore, where, in June, they nominated Senator Stephen Douglas for president. The pro-slavery delegates formed a rival convention and nominated John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky as their presidential candidate.

The young Republican Party met in Chicago in May 1860 and adopted a platform that called on Congress to ban slavery in the territories, as well as other non-slavery-related planks that favored the interests of the North. For their presidential candidate, the delegates nominated Abraham Lincoln of Illinois.

Thus, four candidates contended for the presidency in the election of 1860: two Democrats, one Republican, and John Bell of Tennessee, who ran on the National Constitutional Union Party ticket. As the weeks and months passed, it appeared that it was the Republican, Abraham Lincoln, who would prevail. The prospect of a Republican president set many in the South to call for secession from the union. In November, Lincoln won the election with hardly a vote being cast for him in the South—demonstrating to frightened southerners that the North, if it stood together, could capture the presidency without any aid from the South. Many southerners feared that if their states remained in the union, they would be at the mercy of the northern states and their interests.

Despite the talk of secession, President-elect Lincoln doubted that any of the southern states would take such a drastic step. He was wrong. On December 20, 1860, a state convention in South Carolina voted for secession. Soon after, state conventions in Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida voted to leave the union. They were soon followed by Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Representatives of these states then met in Montgomery, Alabama, and adopted a new constitution and government for what was called the Confederate States of America. On February 9, 1861, the delegates in Montgomery chose Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as their first president.

Fort Sumter

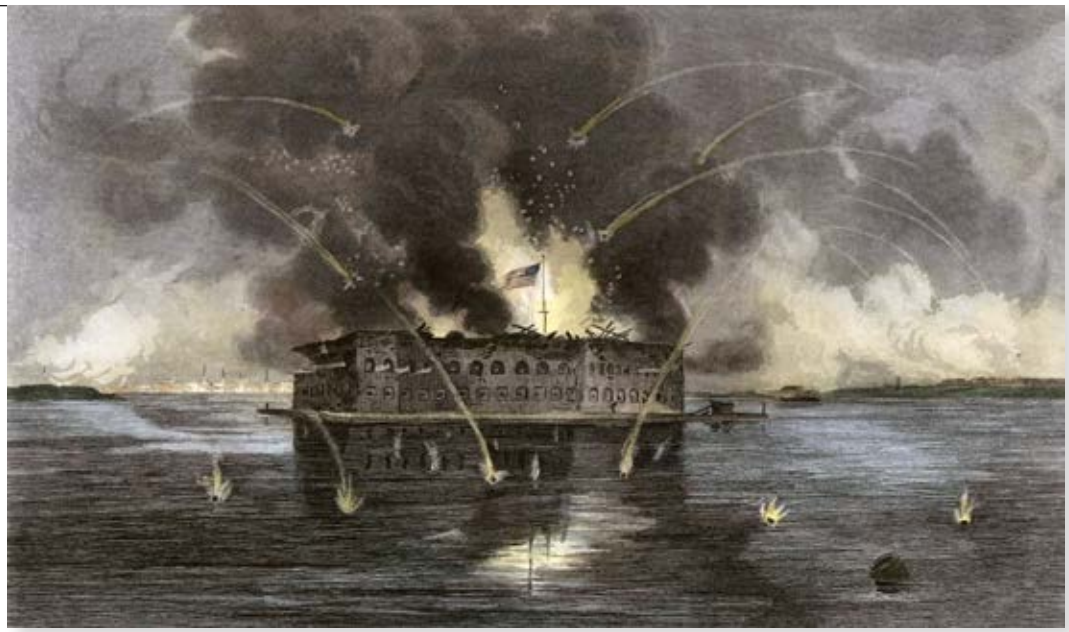
Following their secession from the union, the Confederate states took control of any federal forts that lay within their boundaries. In the Deep South, only two forts remained in federal hands: Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida and Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. James Buchanan, who was still president, had done nothing to stop the seizure of the forts, though he did try to send supplies to Fort Sumter. But members of the South Carolina militia would not permit the supply ships to enter Charleston harbor, so they turned back.



General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard

When he became president in March 1861, Lincoln declared the secession of the southern states illegal. He said that, though he would send no army into the South, he would not abandon any United States government property that lay in the seceded states. He thus informed Governor Pickens of South Carolina that he was sending a supply ship to Fort Sumter.

Pickens, General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (a Louisianan who commanded Confederate forces around Charleston), and President Jefferson Davis all thought Lincoln's decision not to withdraw troops from Sumter was an act of war. In their minds, the Confederacy had the right to possess all federal property within its borders. Thus, Davis telegraphed Beauregard to command the federal commander at Fort Sumter, Major Robert Anderson, to surrender. When Anderson refused, he was informed that Confederate forces would open fire on the fort. About an hour later, at 4:30 a.m., on the morning of April 12, 1861, Confederate batteries began their bombardment. The assault continued throughout the day and into the night. The next day, Anderson surrendered. He had run out of ammunition.



An 1863 depiction of the bombardment of Fort

War and More Secession

Two days after the surrender of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to join the United States army to end the rebellion in the South. President Davis, who had anticipated that war would come, had asked a month prior for 100,000 volunteers to defend the South. Thus did secession lead to war.

War, in turn, led to more secession. The northernmost southern states had before Sumter been hesitant to secede; but Lincoln's call for volunteers convinced the most populous of these states, Virginia, that it could not stand by while Lincoln subjugated her sister states. Consequently, Virginia called a state convention that, on April 17, 1861, voted to secede from the union.

The states of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Arkansas followed Virginia's lead. Only the "border" states of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri remained in the union, though a large number of citizens in each state favored secession. In Missouri, federal forces drove the pro-Confederate governor from the state. Kentucky decided not to secede but resolved to remain neutral. In Maryland, Lincoln used the army to jail pro-southern legislators so that the state government could not vote for secession.

Thus commenced the struggle that has become known to us as the Civil War.

Chapter 12 Review

Summary

- By 1840, membership in anti-slavery societies numbered about 150,000. Within this membership were those who believed in a gradual phasing out of slavery, while others (the abolitionists) favored immediate emancipation. The most prominent of the abolitionists was William Lloyd Garrison. Both anti-slavery and abolitionist groups formed societies and published journals to promote their views.
- Black persons contributed to their own emancipation in various ways: by escape or assisting others to escape through the Underground Railroad; by engaging in public speaking and by writing. The Underground Railroad was a system whereby escaping slaves were given guidance and refuge in their flight to freedom.
- Southerners reacted to anti-slavery and abolitionist attacks on their section in various ways—by, for instance, defending slavery or comparing the lot of slaves to the condition of wage earners in the North. Southern fears over the future of slavery coalesced around the question of what should be done with the new territories the United States had seized from Mexico—whether they should be open to slavery or not. To settle this argument, Congress passed the Compromise of 1850.
- Protestant Americans were divided among themselves as to what the proper Christian attitude should be to the institution of slavery. Catholics were also divided on the question of the morality of slavery, many thinking it was a political rather than a moral problem. Some Catholics owned slaves and engaged in the buying and selling of slaves. Contrary to papal teachings on the immorality of the slave trade and, to some degree, slavery itself, two American Catholic bishops defended the institution. The writing of one of these bishops, Augustus Martin, was condemned by the Congregation of the Index in Rome, with the pope's approval.
- The question of the placement of a transcontinental railroad became a sectional controversy pitting the slave states and free states against each other. To win support for a central route (that would benefit the North), Illinois' senator, Stephen A. Douglas, proposed a policy called "popular sovereignty." The policy, enshrined in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, would allow settlers of a territory to decide whether or not they would allow slavery within their borders. The policy undid previous compromises between North and South over the territories.
- Kansas became the battleground in which pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces battled for control of the new territorial government. Because of this struggle, Kansas erupted into a small civil war. Both sides were brutal and cold-blooded, committing robberies and murders, burning down settlements and pillaging property.
- A new political party, the Republican, built its platform in part on opposition to slavery and its extension into the territories. In 1854, the Republicans and other parties opposed to the Democrats won control of Congress. In 1856, the Republicans ran their first presidential candidate, John C. Frémont. Though the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, won the election, Frémont could have won if he had taken every northern state, without a single southern state. For southerners, this demonstrated the possibility that the North could come to control not only the House of Representatives but the presidency as well.
- In its ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, the Supreme Court declared (among other things) that Congress had no authority to limit slavery in the territories. Writing the decision for the court, Chief Justice Taney said that when the founding fathers used the expression "all men are created equal," they did not intend to include black persons, who, if they were slaves, remained the property of their masters even in "free" territories. The decision rendered compromises like the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional.
- In 1858, during the campaign in Illinois for U.S. Senate, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debated one another over whether slavery should be prohibited in the territories, among other issues.

Chapter 12 Review (continued)

Though Lincoln lost the election, the debates established for him a prominent place in the western Republican Party and a name and reputation among Republicans in the East.

- John Brown attempted to capture the federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, but he was captured and executed for treason. Brown's attempt to ignite a slave rebellion increased southern fear and loathing for the North, encouraging the southern secessionist movement.
- The election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 with no southern support convinced many southerners that remaining in the union was dangerous to their section. On December 20, 1860, a state convention in South Carolina voted for secession, and was soon followed by Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Representatives of these states then met in Montgomery, Alabama, and adopted a new constitution and government for what was called the Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis of Mississippi was named president.
- Fort Sumter was a federal fort in Charleston harbor, South Carolina. When the Confederates refused to surrender Sumter to the federal government, Confederate batteries opened fire on the fort on April 12, 1861. The federal garrison in Fort Sumter surrendered the next day.
- President Lincoln's call for troops to suppress the rebellion in the South induced other southern states to secede from the union. Thus commenced the struggle that is called the American Civil War.

Key Concepts

abolition: the act of abolishing; in the sense used in this chapter, the abolishing of slavery
indictment: in law, a formal accusation of wrongdoing
Congregation of the Index: an official department within the Church's government structures in the Holy See that examined books and other published material to see if they agreed with Catholic teaching

Dates to Remember

1839: Pope Gregory XVI issues *In Supremo Apostolatus*.
1850: California enters the Union as a free state, by the Compromise of 1850.
1852: publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
1854: Stephen Douglas brokers the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
Formation of the Republican Party
1857: The Supreme Court issues a ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.
1859: John Brown leads a raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia.
1860: Abraham Lincoln elected president
South Carolina votes to secede from the union.
Six other states secede from the union.
1861: formation of the Confederate States of America
Confederate assault on Fort Sumter
Virginia and three other states vote to secede.

Central Characters

William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879): an American journalist who helped lead the abolitionist campaign against slavery
Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896): author of the antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
John Brown (1800–1859): an American abolitionist whose raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in 1859 and subsequent execution made him a martyr to the anti-slavery cause
Frederick Douglass (1818–1895): former black slave who was one of the most eminent antislavery leaders in the 19th century
Isabella Baumfree ("Sojourner Truth") (d. 1883): an African-American reformer who used her religious fervor to further the abolitionist movement
Harriet Tubman (d. 1913): an former slave who led many slaves to freedom from the South as a "conductor" on the "underground railroad"
Jefferson Davis (1808–1889): secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce and, later, President of the Confederate States of America

Stephen Douglas (1813–1861): leader of the Democratic Party and senator from Illinois, who favored the cause of popular sovereignty in the territories; Democratic candidate for president in the 1860 election
Roger Taney (1777–1864): Supreme Court Chief Justice who wrote the decision in the case, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*
Dred Scott (1799–1858): A black Missourian who brought suit in the case, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*

Questions for Review

1. Today, nearly everyone believes slavery is an evil, but this was not true in America before 1860. On what grounds did Americans at the time disagree with each other over slavery?
2. What did William Lloyd Garrison mean by "slaveocracy"? Why, according to Garrison, were both the North and South part of a slaveocracy?
3. In what ways, according to George Fitzhugh, was the northern employer worse than the southern slaveholder?
4. Name the policy that declared that the people of a territory should decide for themselves whether their territory would admit slavery or not.
5. Did Buchanan win with a close vote in the election of 1854, or a landslide victory? Justify your position based on what you have learned so far about the Electoral College.
6. In his debates with Senator Douglas, on what grounds did Abraham Lincoln argue against permitting slavery in the territories?
7. Why did many northerners oppose the Kansas-Nebraska Act?
8. On what grounds did Dred Scott's lawyer argue that his client was, in fact, a free man, and not a slave? What was Chief Justice Taney's response?
9. How did Kansas Territory go from having no government to having two governments?
10. Did the Catholic absolutely condemn slavery before 1860? Please explain.

Ideas in Action

1. Consider the word "compromise," both as you have seen it used so far in American history and in a wider context (such as how the word is used today). By evaluating the Compromise of 1850 or the Kansas-Nebraska Act, make an argument in answer to the question, "Are compromises good for America?"
2. How do the examples of President Polk and President Taylor defy the common stereotype that the North opposed slavery, while the South was in favor of it? Why might those stereotypes exist?
3. Why did it matter to people in the North, and not just abolitionists and anti-slavery activists, that slaves who had escaped to "free" states had to be returned to their masters?

Highways and Byways

Arguments For, and Against, Slavery

In 1856, William Grayson, a lawyer (and, therefore, one accustomed to prolonged argument in colorful language), published a kind of rebuttal to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was a long poem (1,562 lines) called *The Hireling and the Slave*. Before the poem itself begins, however, Grayson presents what he calls the "argument," a sort of outline of the main points he will make. The argument makes the following points, among others:

- Both the hireling (the *hired* or free worker) and the slave undergo "hard labor" for the "reward [of] subsistence."
- The hireling, however, does not always obtain this reward but suffers from such "miseries" as "starvation, vices, brutality, subjection to military service, [and] expulsion from his country."
- "The transportation of the Negro from Africa to America" has been "a blessing to him." It has allowed him to be instructed in "mechanic arts" and agriculture, giving him skills by which he

Chapter 12 Review (continued)

contributes products that are "numerous and useful to the whole world."

- Such improvement for the black slave was "not possible in his own country"—Africa. Therefore, his coming to America, even as a slave, "has been brought by Providence." In denouncing slavery, abolitionists make themselves "denouncers of Providence."
- The slave enjoys a "superiority . . . over the rest of his race." He is secure from want and receives an education that is, at least, "not more defective than that of Hirelings in Europe."

In effect, Grayson asks whether it is better to be legally free (but starving, always at the point of homelessness, and prone to vice and abuse by employers who pay insufficient wages to live) or to be a slave, legal property, who will be well-cared for by his owner.

The life of one slave might have caused Grayson to rethink at least some of his views on slavery and the workings of Providence. Two years before Grayson published his poem, a black boy was born in Brush Creek, Missouri and baptized in St. Peter's Church in that town, where his parents had been married by a Catholic priest three years before. The boy's parents were slaves and had been given the permission of their owners to marry. During the Civil War, while their father fled to join the northern army, this little boy, Augustus Tolton, his siblings, and their mother escaped, first to St. Louis (160 miles to the northeast) and then to Hannibal, Missouri, on the Mississippi River. From Hannibal, his mother rowed them across the Mississippi River and landed in the free state of Illinois.

The fugitive family traveled to Quincy (about 20 miles north of where they landed) and began life among other escaped slaves. While his mother became a *Hireling*, working for a tobacco company, making cigars, Providence brought the young Augustus to the attention of the parish priest, Father Peter McGirr. Through McGirr, Augustus received an education in the parish school. Later, he attended a college run by the Franciscans.

Providence, too, did not abandon Augustus Tolton when, as a young man, he felt called to the Catholic priesthood. Though no seminary in the United States would accept him because he was black, he was at last allowed to study in Rome. There, on Holy Saturday, April 24, 1886, Tolton was ordained to the holy priesthood in the basilica of St. John Lateran, the pope's own cathedral, in Rome. He became the United States' first African-American Catholic priest, noted for his zeal and holiness.