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"They Deny That It is an Evil: A Reconsideration of Antebellum Southern Liberalism"

Master’s Thesis

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In 1835, a glut of abolitionist literature began to flood the mails of Charleston, South Carolina, inciting the fury of local slaveholding elites. Under tremendous pressure, political and social, local postmaster Alfred Huger banned abolitionist material from his jurisdiction. A firestorm erupted throughout the abolitionist circles of the North with daily thundering from their presses denouncing the latest in proslavery southern censorship. When Huger asked Postmaster General Amos Kendall, a staunch member of the Jacksonian faithful, for guidance, Kendall refused to either sanction or decry Huger's actions, further intensifying the wave of anger directed against the defenders of slavery in the government. In New York City, the editor of the *Evening Post*, William Leggett, who originally thought slavery relatively insignificant and benign, viscerally attacked Huger and Kendall as traitorous violators of individual rights. This prompted local antislavery societies to send him copious amounts of literature which he then consumed with a voracious appetite for intellectual stimulation and pugilism. Leggett emerged from this affair as one of the leading antislavery intellectuals in the North, calling for northern secession to separate from the evils of southern slavery. Southern intellectuals, however, reacted to the abolitionist mails controversy in quite the opposite way, deepening and refining their support for their increasingly troublesome institution. Guiding the actions of all actors involved were differing concepts of liberalism, being forged by fiery intellectual conflict into at least two distinct traditions within American thought.

In his defense of all citizens' equal rights to the public mails, Leggett and his fellow radical *laissez-faire*, antislavery Jacksonians were calling on and building upon the

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long-established tradition of Jeffersonian liberalism, an intellectual tradition which dominated the mind of the young republic, hallmarked by ideals of free trade, states' rights, and small government. Yet it would seem that the very cradle of Jeffersonian liberalism--the South--compromised the fundamental tenet of the creed: Natural Rights. In the wake of the most intense abolitionist agitation in decades, targeted specifically at the heart of southern slavery, Charleston, South Carolina, southern intellectuals appear to have jettisoned the critical elements of Jeffersonian liberalism in favor of protecting the domestic institution of slavery. The southern reaction was not, of course, confined to suppression of the mails and other official actions, but spread like flames in the wind to public burnings of abolitionist literature and effigies, public calls for the corpses of prominent figures in the abolitionist movement, and violent mobs terrorizing the black population which was thought to be roused to the point of insurrection by the northern agitation. Speaking out against slavery in the South soon became a taboo warranting defamations of character, destruction of careers, and losses of life and limb. Jeffersonian notions of a liberal social and political order were rent asunder by the frenzied desire to maintain slavery.  

Yet departures from Jeffersonian liberalism, which this essay will loosely define as containing firm commitments to Natural Rights theory, free markets, severely limited government in virtually all respects, and a philosophical opposition to slavery

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2 Though this had been the case in the South for some time before the mails controversy, most notably after the publication of David Walker’s “Appeal,” this particular event has been chosen for focus because it clearly delineates the divergent intellectual and political paths of proslavery and antislavery Democrats and those within the Jeffersonian intellectual paradigm. See Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940); Clement Eaton, “Chapter V: Cassius Marcellus Clay of Kentucky: The Emergence of the Radical,” and “Chapter VII: Hinton Rowan Helper of North Carolina: Spokesman for the Non-Slaveholding Class,” in The Mind of the Old South, (Louisiana State University Press, 1964).
approximating the “Necessary Evil School,” (see below), do not end with violations of dissenters' rights and liberties. The development of southern thought in the United States throughout the antebellum period can be described as a process of transforming and eventually breaking from Jeffersonian liberalism. Indeed, from the beginning of the Jacksonian period (1820-1845) and through the period of sectional crisis (1845-1861), one can see a distinctly southern form of social and political philosophy evolve within the Jeffersonian tradition and steadily chip away at its liberal foundations to the point of shaping a decidedly and expressly anti-Jeffersonian philosophy. This trend was so strong, that in his masterful study of the growth of the American state during the Civil War, Richard Bensel observes that, "The most important barrier to expansion of the central state in the last antebellum years was southern separatism, not because the South was philosophically hostile to central power (as the Confederate experience was to demonstrate), but because a successful defense of the interests of plantation slavery ensured continued stalemate over control of the national political economy."^{3}

Yet it has been claimed that these proslavery southerners retained Jeffersonian liberalism throughout the antebellum period and specifically sought to protect slavery as liberals. In his *The Debate Over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America* (2000), David Ericson presents readers with one of the most important works on early American liberalism in recent years. In his rather brief survey of six antebellum thinkers, three antislavery and three proslavery, Ericson addresses what has become known as "the liberal consensus" thesis. First propounded by Louis Hartz in 1955, this thesis holds that the best way to understand American intellectual history is as

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the continuous unfolding of a single liberal tradition. Liberalism, then, acts as a sort of constraint line hedging political thinkers and acting as the prime factor in motivating non-liberal or anti-liberal intellectual movements. Ericson adopts a modified version of this argument. Attempting to carefully avoid essentializing liberalism, he states that this single liberal tradition is best understood as a rhetorical tradition rather than a practical tradition. That is, both sides of the slavery debate preferred to use liberal arguments to support their positions even if we might be inclined to describe them as being quite illiberal in practice.4

Of absolute importance to the entirety of the work are Ericson's definitions of liberal and non-liberal ideas. He defines liberal ideas as "[appealing] to personal freedom, equal worth, government by consent, and private ownership of property as core human values." Non-liberal ideas, then, "appeal to some notion of natural inequality based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or birthright that denies those liberal values to significant numbers of human beings." With such definitions, Ericson attempts to show that two fairly representative thinkers and one radical thinker on each side of the slavery debate qualify as making liberal arguments, thereby firmly positioning the debate within the American liberal tradition in the Hartzian paradigm.5

By far, this way of employing the term "liberal" is the most serious problem in question. First and foremost, Ericson's use of "liberal" as entirely rhetorical is problematic because it does not consider the intellectual heritage to which any particular thinker would ascribe, only the way he or she chooses to "sell" his or her argument. This

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5 Ibid. 14-36.
becomes problematic when we begin to investigate other areas of their thought apart from their views on slavery and when we attempt to construct a liberal tradition or intellectual movement in American history. In other words, he is simply defining away entire intellectual traditions and artificially fusing others together such that his arguments are supported. The process of intellectual change is therefore hidden from the view of the historian who adopts such methodology. Further, when one investigates the political economy of most northern abolitionists, one sees overwhelmingly non-liberal thought--advocacy for central banking, protective tariffs, government-sponsored internal improvement projects, and a host of other interventionist schemes. While it may indeed be true that rhetorical liberalism--rhetoric seeking expanded zones of liberty for individuals--dominated the antebellum period, simply looking for rhetorical liberalism tells us next to nothing without analyzing how these rhetorical liberals acted in practice and adjusted their rhetoric to fit particularly illiberal policies. How illiberal ideas of political economy interacted with and shaped liberal ideas about slavery and American government, or vice versa, must remain a mystery to those who, like Ericson, do not address the minds of historical actors as they indeed often existed—somewhat muddled, incomplete and sometimes inconsistent tableaus, rather than ideal forms of liberal thought, construed from

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7 For a broad overview of Jacksonian period political economy and policy, see Daniel Feller, The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
Ericson's great difficulty is in placing proslavery thinkers within the liberal tradition. In his analysis of Thomas Dew and George Fitzhugh, two important antebellum southern proslavery thinkers, Ericson claims that both argued for slavery because they found it greatly increased the slaves' zones of "practical liberty." That is, slavery enabled those of African descent to produce more, learn trades and skills, raise families in a peaceful environment, and, most importantly, experience the liberating light of Christianity. Similarly, proslavery South Carolina politician James Henry Hammond's "Mudsill" speech, which declared that every society has a "mudsill class" which forms the laboring basis upon which the freedom of the higher classes rests, seeks an expansion of "practical liberty," or the scope of one's ability to act as one wishes. Hammond's advocacy of slavery was rooted in the idea that the liberty of the majority depended upon the enslavement of the minority and, in the process, the liberty of the minority should be maximized. Ericson asserts, therefore, that the rhetoric of these thinkers possessed the same goals as the antislavery thinkers—the most expansive zones of individual liberty possible.8

As above noted, however, Ericson's argument quickly becomes problematic. First, recall that Ericson defines non-liberal ideas as using categories (like race) to deny equal rights to segments of the human population. He then asserts that Thomas Dew, George Fitzhugh, and James Hammond were liberals. Yet the entireties of their proslavery philosophies were fundamentally rooted in their conceptions of Africanness and race. As historian Drew Gilpin Faust notes, to these southerners, "scientific validation of

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Negro inferiority offered an alluring and seemingly irrefutable argument to those favoring the social subordination of blacks in slavery.\textsuperscript{9} Racial preconceptions of African inferiority and the paternalistic desire to efficiently manage this inferiority--not liberal notions about property, human rights, and equity--were the cornerstones of proslavery thought.\textsuperscript{10} George Fitzhugh provides perhaps the most useful counter to Ericson in that he explicitly rejected the free labor society of the North as a destructive example of corrosive human nature running wild. Instead, Fitzhugh advocated stronger controls on society from above, much as Hammond sought strict subordination of the mudsill class to the master class.\textsuperscript{11}

Ericson's desire to conflate modern, progressivist liberalism with Jeffersonian, Natural Rights liberalism, then, results in quite problematic analysis. Conflating the two traditions, rather than illuminating anything, merely clouds their intellectual roots, their developments, contributions, accomplishments, and their effects on American politics, society, and thought. A more representative and useful definition of liberalism is offered by Raymond Krohn:

Liberalism refers to a certain political and economic philosophy that comprises multiple layers of thought and spans centuries of texts, theorists, practitioners, and adherents. Individual rights, and the state consensually designed to protect them, are at liberalisms' core--values that undergird, for present-day proponents, the libertarian movement as well.\textsuperscript{12}

Further, there is a rather large and growing body of literature addressing the causes of southern secession and the ensuing Civil War which attributes these developments to a southern tradition of Jeffersonian liberalism. Ideals of small government, constitutional

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. 15.
\textsuperscript{11} George Fitzhugh, “Sociology for the South,” in McKitrick, \textit{Slavery Defended}, 34-50.
order, states' rights, and *laissez-faire*, many suggest, prompted southern secession.

Southern Jeffersonians, attempting to protect the above slate of revolutionary ideals, acted upon their right to alter or abolish the government which had become so destructive of individual rights. Northern disregard for the Constitution, the growth of federal power over state power, and, most especially, *non-laissez-faire* economic policies like protective tariffs supposedly pushed disenchanted Jeffersonian southerners to the secessionist brink.¹³

This essay seeks to correct for this error. It attempts to establish a more representative, more analytically consistent, more historically-grounded intellectual history of the antebellum South which will ultimately address the question of whether liberalism had any part in the rise of southern separatism and nationalism and the coming of the Civil War. It will be demonstrated that throughout the Jacksonian and Sectional periods, southern intellectuals, beginning within the tradition of Jeffersonian liberalism, forged a new paradigm of political, economic, and social thought culminating in radical departures from Jeffersonianism. The resultant blend of weak *laissez-faire*, radical proslavery, and proslavery nationalism will be referred to as "Southernism." This departure, overwhelmingly precipitated by the desire to protect plantation slavery, precludes offering liberal ideology as a factor in Civil War causation. This essay will utilize a variety of primary sources representative of popular intellectuals and readership

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including the Charleston *Mercury* and *Southern Patriot* and the New Orleans *Picayune*, *Jeffersonian Republican*, *Jeffersonian*, and the *Courier (Le Courrier De La Louisiane)* to illustrate this intellectual shift. *The Southern Patriot* was, according to Rothbard and Dorfman, "the leading Charleston daily;" the *Mercury* was the prime intellectual outlet for Robert Barnwell Rhett and John C. Calhoun, the two men who most dominated South Carolinian political and economic thought during the period; and the New Orleans *Picayune*, as one of the first papers in the old Southwest to sell for pennies (the word "*picayon*" referred to a Spanish coin worth about 6.25 American cents), became one of the most widely-read papers in New Orleans shortly after its premier issue in 1837. The four New Orleans papers examined constitute the main organs of both the Louisiana Democratic Party and the vast majority of liberal readership and popular thought in the New Orleans area.14 Thus, these three sources not only contain strong rhetoric and challenging arguments, but their popularity indicates that their intellectual positions were part of a general shift in southern thought.

**The Intellectual Background, Transition, and Rise of the "Southernists"**

The Jeffersonian liberal tradition, while not monolithic in any sense, was composed of a fairly consistent set of political, economic, and social principles with their roots in the French and Scottish Enlightenments, which in turn developed largely out of the Scholastic tradition of Natural Rights theory. The Jeffersonians were firmly grounded in Lockean rights theory, Aristotelian virtue ethics, classical and Enlightenment political theory, Smithian and French *laissez-faire* economics, and they possessed a characteristically

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late-Enlightenment recognition of slavery as an unqualified evil in the abstract, but an unfortunate practical necessity in, at least, the short term.\footnote{Murray Rothbard, \textit{Economic Thought Before Adam Smith: An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought, Volume One and Classical Economics: An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought, Volume Two}. (Auburn: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2006); Paul Conkin, \textit{Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists}, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).} Holding fast to Lockean natural law and rights, the Jeffersonians firmly supported the ideals of the "Declaration of Independence," that all men possessed inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property, and that the sole purpose of government was to protect these rights. Once one's rights had been declared and recognized, a vigilant defense of these inviolable rights of Man required a firm, manly virtue as modeled by the heroes of the Revolution.\footnote{Francois Furstenberg, "Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Discourse," \textit{The Journal of American History} 89, No. 4 (March 2003).} Bolstering this approach to defending individual rights were a thoroughly \textit{laissez-faire} theory of political economy and staunch political localism within the American federal system.\footnote{Lance Banning, \textit{The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology}, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).}

As Paul Conkin notes, "Adam Smith neither originated political economy nor provided Americans with their first instructions in the intricacies of economic analysis. The French liberals and Physiocrats, many of whom were personal friends of Franklin and Jefferson, first introduced Americans to the new discipline."\footnote{Conkin, \textit{Prophets of Prosperity}, 17.} Jefferson was a regular translator and consultant for the \textit{laissez-faire philosophes} and the "ideologues," Destutt de Tracy, Pierre Jean George Cabanis, Constantin Francois Chasseboeuf, comte de Volney, Pierre DuPont, and Jean-Baptiste Say. According to Rothbard, "As early as 1790, Thomas Jefferson had hailed \textit{The Wealth of Nations} as the best book in political economy, along with the work of Turgot," and, once the text was published, he respected Say's \textit{Trait} (1803) even more. As Rothbard notes, such an admirer of Say was Jefferson, that "]He]
wanted to offer Say the professorship of political economy at his newly founded University of Virginia." Say's opposition to central banking, paper money, price controls, unnecessary taxation--including prohibitive tariffs--grants of monopolistic privilege, and virtually all other forms of government intervention in the economy became so popular that his *Treatise on Political Economy* became the best-selling textbook in the United States.20

Jefferson's thought regarding slavery is particularly note-worthy because it is here that transitionary figures--those southern Jeffersonians who began the shift in southern thought from liberalism to “Southernism,”--and later southern thinkers made their most deliberate breaks with Jeffersonian liberalism. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, often considered one of the most important American books published before the 1800s for its rare and extremely thorough sociological and legal analysis, Thomas Jefferson answers a series of questions about Virginia asked to him by one of the French ambassadors to the fledgling United States. Amidst a sea of data and explanations of Virginian demographics, law, and society are buried some of Jefferson's most famous musings on the subject of American slavery. Describing African-American slaves, Jefferson wrestles with his convictions that slavery is an absolute abomination, entirely contrary to the Natural Law, and his belief that Africans were physically and mentally inferior to whites and therefore especially suited for slavery. Further complicating this philosophical quandary was the conviction that slavery could not safely be abolished in Virginia without the terrors of race war. Ultimately, what we see in Jefferson's *Notes* regarding slavery is a hesitant hope for emancipation with the consent of masters and colonization--removing blacks from the United States and establishing protected communities for them in

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Africa--which would minimize the chances of race war.

Significantly, Jefferson displays no hesitation in admitting the evils of slavery. Declaring that "Man is an imitative animal," he claims that slavery causes the worst elements of both masters and slaves to be emphasized and daily reinforced. Later generations then learn these traits as positively good and necessary, further degrading the moral quality of all parties in slave societies. White children in slave societies "thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities." Slavery, contrary to the laws of Nature, incurs the wrath of God: "Indeed I tremble for my country when [I] reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever." Further, should violence erupt between the races, Jefferson believed that "The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest." Slave masters, violating the Natural Law in such a terrible manner were forsaken, therefore, by both Human and Divine.²¹ So opposed to the institution was he, that in the first draft of the "Declaration of Independence," Jefferson compared King George III to a Saracen pirate, inhumanly shackling the New World with the fetters of African slaves:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's [sic] most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain.²²

In describing the slave population, however, Jefferson's liberalism is hidden by his overt racism and cultural chauvinism. He subordinates all black accomplishments to

white preferences, meeting African culture on his terms rather than engaging in value-free analysis. Any cultural achievements, small though he believed them to be, were overshadowed by the physical and moral depravity he perceived in Africans. First and foremost was their skin tone. Black skin, Jefferson wrote, hides emotions and made Africans untrustworthy—an early manifestation of white distrust of blacks which became more pervasive with each slave revolt. Several physical traits including hair, bone structure, and smell further lower blacks in his estimation, leading him to refer to black men as "oranootans." Morally, slaves were inferior to whites as well, though he finds this to be at least partially resulting from the conditions of slavery: "The man, in whose favour no laws of property exist, probably feels himself less bound to respect those made in favour of others." Therefore, Jefferson constructed and defended an illiberal, racist position while surrounding himself by liberal hopes in the advancement of all peoples. Transitionary southern intellectuals seized upon this element of illiberality in Jefferson's thinking—which was otherwise entirely consonant with broader Enlightenment liberalism—and expounded upon it, intensifying the shift in southern thought from liberalism to a new southern paradigm. This growing illiberalism, as will be seen, did not confine itself to the subject of slavery, but spread throughout southern thought.

The first, and most important, of these transitional figures was John Taylor of

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23 Ibid. 264-267.
24 Interestingly, Jefferson here is anticipating the "Cuffee-Nat Turner Syndrome" of later American slave owners. Proper, subservient slaves, euphemistically referred to as "Cuffees," were always suspiciously looked upon as merely waiting for the right opportunity to strike back against their masters with violent reprisals. Paternalistic slaveholders, therefore, were caught between the self-deluding lie that slavery was in the interests of both masters and slaves and the reality that slaves often harbored extreme hatred of their masters. William Freehling, "The Domestic Charade I: Massa's Act," and "The Domestic Charade II: Cuffee's Act," in The Road to Disunion, Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 59-97.
25 Ibid. 267-270.
Caroline, who wrote primarily in the early 1800s. Taylor was a life-long opponent of paper money and all restrictions on trade. He despised both agrarian, egalitarian schemes for the redistribution of wealth and government-granted aristocratic privileges, though "He despised aristocrats more than mobs," as he recognized that corrupt distortions in the natural allocation of property rights tended to arouse agrarian redistributionism in the first place. Taylor recognized that with both agrarianism and aristocracy, government was the tool enabling the evil state of affairs. A stout believer in Lockean property rights, Taylor wanted government strictly confined to protecting rights as any other operations necessarily destroyed them. Like Jefferson, Taylor believed in a right to secession, but thought of it as a last resort, vastly preferring the doctrine of interposition, in which a state acts as arbiter between a national government and the citizens of the state, preventing the latter from unconstitutionally expanding its power. Regarding slavery, Taylor's liberal theories of political economy convinced him that coerced labor was necessarily inefficient compared to free labor. He thought the institution contradictory to Natural Law, though never attempted to find a solution to the dilemma. Like Jefferson, he thought slavery evil, but the potential race war in the wake of abolition would be far worse. In any case, Taylor found the "paper slavery" perpetrated by national banks to be a far more pressing issue. While all of these positions are entirely consonant with Jefferson, Taylor is a transitionary figure, bridging the gap from early antebellum Jeffersonian liberalism to late antebellum "Southernism," in that he attempted to depict southern slavery as somewhat beneficent--southern economic interests demanded decent treatment of slaves whereas northern factory labor could be ruthlessly exploited. This sort of argument would later be

26 Conkin, Prophets of Prosperity, 43-76.
expanded and developed by illiberal thinkers and presses.\textsuperscript{27}

Intensifying the transition was Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, whose most important work stretches from the 1820s to the 1840s. Tucker, educated in the tradition of the Scottish Realists, Duncan, Reid, and Stewart, was also committed to \textit{laissez-faire}, though a distinctly weaker version than were either Jefferson or Taylor. As a Missouri chancery court judge, Tucker supported fiscal and monetary Jeffersonianism, declaring that "Valueless currency led to 'total depravation of the moral sense, and dissolution of moral obligation.'"\textsuperscript{28} Tucker broke with Jefferson, however, in insisting that property was not a natural right, but evolved from social interaction and agreement. Government, however, only existed to protect this social convention and "property thus becomes the measure of the value of liberty." Such a concept became a critical fixture in the thought of planters seeking to maintain their grasp on southern society and politics.\textsuperscript{29} As time progressed, Tucker became a southern nationalist Romantic, criticizing the "dehumanizing" effects of industrial living and half-heartedly defending slavery as the guardian of republican virtue, as the constant reminder of such a degraded state encouraged free men to be more jealous of their liberty. Tucker extended this paternalistic outlook to the point of adopting a Whiggish support of temperance laws. He broke with Jeffersonian political economy by criticizing hard monetary policy as ill-advisedly restricting the supply of credit. To fix this problem, he devised his own version of a national bank which featured a diluted board of directors to minimize corruption and mismanagement. Tucker was a fervent secessionist, arguing that nullification--a position advocating state refusal to enforce

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Robert Brugger, \textit{Beverly Tucker: Heart Over Head in the Old South}, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. 106.
federal laws deemed unconstitutional by the state legislature--admitted the sovereignty of the Union as opposed to one's state. As the possibility of secession loomed in 1850, Tucker’s proclivity toward Romanticism blossomed and his weak support for slavery bloomed into dreams of a vast slaveholder's republic stretching from his home state of Virginia to the Caribbean and on.30

Taylor and Tucker are transitionary figures, therefore, because of their slight, though tremendously influential and important, deviations from Jeffersonian liberalism. While Jeffersonian liberals were intensely troubled by the existence of slavery, Taylor was more concerned with promoting laissez-faire than protecting the rights of persons he found categorically inferior. Tucker, the Romantic southern nationalist, found plantation life so emotionally appealing that he eventually came to promote the strengthening and spread of the institution so odious to Jefferson. Tucker engaged in further deviations when he advanced various schemes to control the value and issue of currency at the national level. These sorts of breaches in the Jeffersonian liberal ramparts widened and spread, gradually overtaking southern intellectual life, creating the intellectual blueprints for what would become a distinctly "Southernist," rather than liberal, school of thought.

The Proto-Southernists: The Early Charleston Mercury and Cardozo's The Southern Patriot

Antebellum South Carolina was home to a slowly decaying, though politically and economically powerful bloc of cotton aristocrats, living off of the labor of slaves and rigidly maintaining planter hegemony throughout society and political life. Charleston,

30 Ibid. "Chapter Six: 'Checking the Car of Destiny,'" "Chapter Seven: Community and Therapy," and "Chapter Eight: 'Thro' the Lips of Madmen.'"
the summer home of rural planters seeking a vacation from the heady humidity of
backcountry plantations, was home to some of the most radical thinkers in the South. As
the political lynchpin of the nullification and secessionist movements, South Carolina and
its hub of economic activity, Charleston, spearheaded anti-tariff, anti-compromise, and
anti-Union movements. Arguably the most entrenched slave society in the United States,
South Carolina bristled at all attempts to constrict the institution which planters considered
their only hope, socially, economically, and politically: slavery. South Carolina was
forced to endure a wave of emigration as the best soil in the state became depleted from a
generation of overly-intensive farming and the sons of the planter class moved west to
younger states and soils, like those of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and
Texas. Slavery, the only guaranteed way to ensure the continuation of planter hegemony,
was of paramount concern for antebellum South Carolinians and any activity on the part of
the national government exceeding its mandate as perceived by South Carolinians was
considered an unacceptable intrusion on southern life and a possible precedent for further
interventions, which might eventually include limitations on slavery.31 The long, slow
death of South Carolinian prosperity signaled the end of Carolinian Jeffersonianism and
the rise of Southernism.

Similar to Taylor and Tucker's level of deviations from Jeffersonian liberalism,
though more severe and ground-breaking, are the ideas propounded by the South Carolina
newspapers, the Mercury and The Southern Patriot. Significant attention will also be paid
to Robert Turnbull’s “The Crisis,” (1827) a set of essays which were originally published

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in the *Mercury*, and focusing on a southern theory of the Union. This section will investigate the ideology of these sources to examine their changes to the paradigm of Jeffersonian liberalism.

In a series of essays first published (1827) in the *Mercury* and later compiled together as a pamphlet entitled “The Crisis,” South Carolina planter and activist Robert Turnbull reacted to the string of tariff increases and likely increase in the near future. Turnbull advocated an extremely tough posturing for South Carolina: secession. Only threats of secession could accomplish what Turnbull sought: a Union which would protect southern interests. It was his love of the Union rather than a southern nationalism, Turnbull asserted, that compelled him to defend the interests of his native section, lest the South be pushed to disunion before the national government curbed its lust for expanded powers.\(^{32}\) States' rights, therefore, formed the best defense both *against* federal tyranny and *of* the Union. Bolstering this initial defense of states' rights was the specter of federal intrusion in the domestic institution of slavery. Should congressional powers continue to be inflated and the population of the North become even more politically powerful, "Congress may be propelled by the public opinion of the North, to regulate our domestic policy."

The fate of slavery and southern race relations remain a ghostly afterthought terrorizing the mind of the reader throughout "The Crisis."\(^{33}\)

Turnbull continually called upon the tradition of American federalism and liberalism when advancing his constitutional theory of a compact of sovereign individuals through their agents, the states. He elaborated theories dating back to the earliest state constitutions and the discussions of sovereignty and proper statecraft which occupied

\(^{32}\) Ibid. 7-11.  
\(^{33}\) See especially Ibid. 12 and 26.
political life during the throes of the American Revolution and the turbulent 1780s. To Turnbull, then, the Union was indeed a force for great good when used properly, as opposed to the creed of Jeffersonians like William Leggett who thought of the Union as *nothing but* an evil, an evil which perpetuated itself on the backs of slaves. Indeed Turnbull was so concerned with preventing the imminent dismantling of the Union in the face of further abuses of southern principles, interests, and rights that it was the “Crisis,” after which the pamphlet was titled.

It was to the end of upholding federalism rather than of elaborating a sound theory of political economy, that Turnbull discusses economic matters. Though he did state that he would favor a low tariff even without the sectional strife involved with protection, he also declared that he was not necessarily against protective tariffs, supported intellectual property merely because it is constitutional, and always subordinated the importance of sound economic theory to political affairs and warnings about the safety of slavery. He did, however, draw upon the tradition of the classical economists in discussing the tariff, asking:

> What are the sayings and doctrines of the political economist! What the authorities of SMITH, SAY and RICARDO, when you address a body, the interests of whose constituents consists in differing from you...Men, with whom, if we except the recollections which the glories of our Revolution inspire, have not, nor never can have the feelings, the sympathies, or the associations that are in common with us in the South.

Thus only briefly and to add the authority of well-respected intellectuals to his political

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36 On Leggett’s opposition to intellectual property and the liberal basis for his thought on this topic, see White, *Democratick Editorials*, 394-400.
37 Ibid. 57, 61-65, 115, 118-121.
38 Ibid. 120-121.
arguments did Turnbull involve himself in the study of political economy. In fact, Turnbull seemed to be utterly confused by economics and somewhat frustrated with the entire enterprise: “To perplex his mind about the impolicy of restrictions on commerce to promote manufactures, and thus to go into the metaphysical subtleties of the school of the economists, can answer no other end, than to bewilder him, as thousands before him have been bewildered.”

It was done not as a matter of serious intellectual engagement with the field, but as a mere appeal to authority which would hopefully disable his opponents.

Whereas Turnbull antagonistically addressed northern interests in protective tariffs, he defended Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase, an action of such dubious constitutionality that Jeffersonian liberals like Randolph, Logan, Taylor, and Tucker disavowed the president. Turnbull twisted his constitutional theory in knots to defend what he took to be a positive policy move--likely so because it vastly extended the sphere of slaveholders’ power and influence--arguing that the Purchase was a war measure and, therefore, the prerogative of the president. Though he avows that he is above politics, the chance to invoke the spirit of Jeffersonianism is not left untaken. When discussing the 1828 presidential election, however, Turnbull advises readers of their choice between John Quincy Adams, who he says cannot be trusted to take a principled stand on the tariff one way or the other, and Jackson, who voted for the 1824 tariff but has at least remained

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39 Ibid. 151
41 Turnbull, "The Crisis," 77-79. Turnbull argued that there existed much popular support for seizing the territory from Spain by force, and once Spain ceded it to Napoleonic France, the support shifted to forcible seizure from France. In order to maintain peace, therefore, Jefferson purchased the territory from Napoleon. The conclusion reached is that this allocation of funds was no different, therefore, than funds for the maintenance of the army or navy. The source of the presidential powers to allocate such funds without a previous congressional spending allocation, however, was left unaddressed.
consistent in his principles.\textsuperscript{42}

It is, as one might expect, on the subject of slavery \textit{qua} slavery that Turnbull made a serious break with Jeffersonian liberalism. His support for slavery was based on racism and paternalism. The only way for blacks to be productive in society was for whites to paternalistically guide them and control them. Free blacks, left to their own devices, "are insolent to the whites, whenever an occasion offers itself, and their occupation, a great portion of the year, is that of thieving or begging." Turnbull insisted, therefore, that even free blacks be rigidly controlled "as if they were slaves." When such paternalistic measures are in place, "they are well disciplined, and are civil to the whites, and in their way, useful. They are peaceable and industrious, and always to be seen at their honest employment." Turnbull had so much disregard for the character of free blacks that he even favored forced expulsion of those viewed as socially undesirable--hardly an example of liberal social philosophy.\textsuperscript{43} As noted above, Jefferson also displayed intense racism, though he recognized slavery to be an unqualified evil which should indeed be dismantled at the earliest possible time without likely causing race war. Turnbull, however, qualified Jefferson's statement that slavery is without a doubt "a necessary evil," declaring that "\textit{If} there be an evil in slavery, the evil is ours (emphasis added)." The crucial "if" in this statement belies his desire not to rid the South of the stain of slavery, but to keep the topic out of national discourse quite literally at all costs. Far from simply showing his commitment to keeping northern noses out of southern business, this comment demonstrates Turnbull's conviction that slavery may, indeed, not be an evil whatsoever.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. 118-119.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. 134-138.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. 130.
So determined was he in this removal of slavery from national discussion, that Turnbull viscerally attacked abolitionists for poisoning southern minds with their doctrines. He railed against emancipationists and colonizationists--those who supported purchasing land in Africa and colonizing it with freed blacks from the United States--as "KNAVES, MADMEN, AND FANATICS."\(^{45}\) He saw them forming a vast loose-constructionist, antislavery conspiracy with the protectionists of the North, expanding the powers of the government to fulfill both ends. Regarding colonization, the effort to purchase land in Africa and ship freed blacks back to their "homeland," Turnbull forthrightly denied any constitutional authority to appropriate funds to such a purpose.\(^{46}\)

Eschewing the chance to attack fiscal illiberalism, he noted that all it would take in the present to seriously threaten slavery in the future was the establishment of a bad precedent: "Congress, some fifteen or twenty years hence, may, for aught we know, think proper to decide that the \textit{gradual} emancipation of the slaves in the United States ought to take place, as essential to 'the general welfare' and the public safety, and they may begin to pass laws on the subject."\(^{47}\) The general welfare clause was not merely to be despised for its transfer of wealth from South to North, but its potential dangers to slavery loom larger than anything, as "Under this exposition is it, that the ultra fanatics and abolitionists of the North contend, that Congress can alter, whenever it pleases, the whole domestic policy of

\(^{45}\) Ibid. 133. Turnbull's detestation of colonization is especially significant because the movement was, while Turnbull was writing, closer to a gentlemen's club for reform-minded Jeffersonian planters and politicians. While reaching quite non-Jeffersonian members like Henry Clay, the American Colonization Society was, throughout the 1820s, primarily composed of "Necessary Evil" thinkers who wished to dilute the institution of slavery as far as they individually and collectively could. Turnbull's vicious reaction to colonization, however, is not merely constitutional, but moral as well. To him, colonizationists are agitators disrupting southern society as well. For more on colonization, see Eric Burin, \textit{Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society}, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

\(^{46}\) Ibid. 18.

\(^{47}\) Ibid. 26.
South-Carolina."

Turnbull would have had the South stop at nothing, including destroying the foundations of liberal society, free speech and open debate, to protect slavery. Any congressional debate on the subject would rouse the hopes of the slave population, inciting domestic insurrection. Turnbull scorned northern abolitionist outsiders, challenging them:

How dare such men, the men of Ohio and the Wabash, &c. professing as they do, friendship and good feelings towards us, presume to discuss a subject of which they know nothing, and...their discussions can produce no other fruit than the bitter apple of discord and disunion....Do these enthusiasts think it a trifling matter to hold out to our slave population prospects which never can be realized; or do they believe, that when by the discussions in Congress, they shall have kindled up amongst these people dissatisfaction, discontent and insubordination, that they can at all times so regulate its heat, that it shall not come to an awful and a wide spreading conflagration?"

Here we see the Jeffersonian concerns about race war, but rather than seek a remedy through open debate, Turnbull counsels the exact opposite: "Congress must not be permitted to express any opinion, that slavery (which is the fundamental policy of this state [emphasis added]), is an EVIL. The expression of any such opinion, would be an interference with a subject, which is not theirs." He goes undoubtedly further than any Jeffersonian liberals would have on this point, declaring that any congressional support for colonization should be met with violence against the enemies of slavery, in both the North and South. Turnbull was indeed so steadfast in his support for national non-interference in slavery that he claimed he would prefer the imperial domination of the South to national

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48 Ibid. 64.
49 Ibid. 121-124.
50 Interestingly, this section of his pamphlet serves to juxtapose Turnbull's decidedly illiberal penchant for policing speech with a decidedly liberal preference for free trade. As we will see below, this pattern of thought steadily transforms by maintaining and reinforcing the support for slavery while eroding the support for free trade. Ibid. 134.
interference with the institution: "Give me disunion. Make me a colonist, not of England, (for that would be going 'from the frying-pan into the fire') but, if you please, of Spain, France, or Holland, rather than compel me to be a permanent resident of South-Carolina, with a power on the part of an American Congress, to legislate directly or indirectly, on the subject of slavery."

More extensive in its scale and scope than “The Crisis,” was the Charleston newspaper which published Turnbull’s original series, the *Mercury*. Despite a slew of different owners and editors, the *Mercury* maintained both theoretical consistency and tremendous popularity. From the establishment of the paper in 1819 through the Civil War, the *Mercury* was entirely supportive of southern radicalism, only vacillating between which cause to support: the united southern front of Calhoun or the separate state action of Robert Barnwell Rhett. Both men exerted incredible influence on the paper which in turn was the most widely-read in South Carolina, even reaching subscribers from as distant as Ohio. As an intellectual body, the *Mercury* possessed two core principles: nationalism (either American or Southern, depending on the circumstances) and protection of slavery and the plantation economy. Most importantly for this study, the *Mercury* routinely abandoned the principles of Jeffersonian liberalism to support these core principles, indicating that to the intellectuals who owned, edited, published, bought, and read this paper, liberalism was of relatively little concern compared to protecting a body of peculiarly *southern* interests, economic, social, and political.

Regarding the tariff and its attendant controversies, the *Mercury* deviated but little

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51 Ibid. 148.
53 Ibid. 21-29.
from the pattern evident in “The Crisis.” Henry Pinckney, editor of the paper, did not condemn protective tariffs *carte blanche*, though he often indicated his proclivity for free trade, he supported Jackson over Adams in 1824, and detested political machinations.\(^54\)

As with Turnbull, when the *Mercury* took a stand on the tariff, it was motivated by the desire to protect slavery. From the earliest days of the tariff controversy, Pinckney implored his readers to beware any assumptions of power by Congress because of the precedents which would be established. First, the northerners would destroy southern commerce, devalue slaves, and then proceed to eliminate the institution: “Is it not possible that, when the value of our black population shall be ruined, those same [northern] manufacturers may devise a scheme either for their immediate purchase or gradual emancipation? Is this idea fantastic?--Is the Missouri question forgotten?”\(^55\) Indeed, Pinckney positively favored the protection scheme advanced by Calhoun, billed as a truly national protective system because it purported to minimize negative effects on the South while still protecting northern interests.\(^56\)

So willing to negotiate on free trade was the *Mercury*, that shortly before publishing “The Crisis,” it declared that as a result of the tariff, “The spirit of resistance, as well as of improvement, is aroused; and while we hail with pleasure every manifestation of the one, we shall always lend our humble aid to the diffusion of the benefits arising from the other.” In other words, so long as intervention in the economy was generalized in all respects, the *Mercury* would not oppose it.\(^57\)

In its theory of government, the *Mercury* almost whole-heartedly agreed with Turnbull, though it believed he sometimes “displayed a tone and temper which we thought

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\(^{54}\) Ibid. 29; *Charleston Mercury*, Jan. 6, Feb. 18, 19, March 20, 26, 1824; Feb. 3, 17, Mar. 9, 11, Apr. 9, 28, May 9, 30, 1825.

\(^{55}\) *Mercury*, 20 March, 1824.


\(^{57}\) *Mercury*, 28 June, 1827.
too vehement." As the debate over protective tariffs in the later 1820s heated and grew to a fever-pitch, however, the *Mercury* became more vehement as well. To such a nationalist organ, "The welfare of the Union [was] paramount to all other views," it was the character of said Union which was in question. A national government which would involve itself in purely local affairs, such as the status of slavery, was not worth maintaining. In virtually all cases in which the *Mercury* discussed its advocacy of nullification, the impetus is the possibility of interference in southern slavery, but while Turnbull was somewhat restrained on this connection, the *Mercury* is quite clear: the issues of free trade and states’ rights begin and end with the safety of slavery.

Particularly interesting for our purposes is the treatment given to the famous Jefferson Day dinner of 1830 hosted by President Jackson, during which Jackson toasted “Our federal Union, it must be preserved,” to which Calhoun replied, “The Union, next to our liberty, the most dear.” In covering the speeches given, the *Mercury* provides fascinating insight into its evolving Southernism. Were one to merely read the *Mercury’s* account of Jeffersonianism in these issues, one could not help but conclude that all Jefferson ever wrote about was the proper course of nullification. Indeed, the famous Principles of ‘98 were, “"practical illustration[s] of Jeffersonian republican principles, and correct...definition[s] of the relative powers of the State and Federal Governments." The paper proved itself, like Turnbull, extremely well-read and -reasoned on this aspect of Jeffersonian theory, but once again, liberal concerns about free speech or laissez-faire were

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59 *Mercury*, 30 May, 1825, 21 Dec., 1827.
not at stake, but rather the decidedly *illiberal* desire to protect slavery overrode all other concerns. Yet another bill for support of the American Colonization Society was before Congress, and the kinds of precedents established by the unconstitutional protective tariff and Jackson’s squelching of nullification could lead to the passage of such detestable legislation. This would be, "the climax of indignity to the South. *Compared with it the Tariff and every other act of oppression are light and bearable* [emphasis added]. It is not only, like the Tariff, a direct violation of our rights, but it conveys upon its face hatred to our institutions and indifference to our safety." Not only, therefore, was the entirety of Jeffersonian liberalism reduced to the doctrine of nullification, but the *Mercury* seemed to have forgotten Jefferson's hatred of slavery.62

Just as in the case of the tariff, constitutional questions were examined through the lens of slavery rather than free trade *per se*. It appears that the *Mercury’s* support for Calhounite opposition to Jackson’s Force Bill--a major factor in allying Calhoun with the Whigs against Jackson and Van Buren--was also rooted entirely within the slavery question. If the president could use the military to stamp out opposition to national schemes antagonistic to the states, then the federal union was no more, replaced by a consolidated, central power which could, should it so choose, stamp out any domestic institutions it wished. As with the tariff, what Calhoun stylized as anti-monarchism was yet another means to the end of proslavery. "If this Bill *does* pass congress,” the *Mercury* shouted, “*South Carolina will secede*; and it might with propriety be entitled 'A BILL TO DISSOLVE THE UNION.'" The bill did pass, but rather than secede, South Carolina

62 *Mercury*, 24, 28 April, 1830.
opted to nullify it instead.\textsuperscript{63}

Once it was determined that the national Democratic party was acting in a manner dangerous to the future of slavery, it was rejected for the perhaps more friendly Whigs, no matter how dangerous they were to the cause of \textit{laissez-faire}. During the controversy over the recharter of the Second Bank of the United States, the \textit{Mercury} claimed that "Since both the Van Buren and the Bank Parties are fighting against the Constitution, South Carolina can league with neither, though she believes the former to be by far the most unprincipled and dangerous enemy."\textsuperscript{64} Van Buren, "an avowed abolitionist in principle," could not be supported by the South, no matter how economically liberal. Though eventually supportive of the Van Buren administration’s most important economic project, the Subtreasury, Calhoun and the \textit{Mercury} only supported it because they feared the power to dictate southern social relations possessed by a great money power, the likes of which could only be created by a system of national banking.\textsuperscript{65} The proslavery specter haunted even this obscure corner of southern political economic thought.

Perhaps the area of thought most illustrative of the sharp decline in southern liberalism as evidenced in the pages of the early \textit{Mercury} is its treatment of slaves and slavery apart from economic or political issues. The \textit{Mercury} represented an early expression—so early it had not yet been named—of what may be called the "Positive

\textsuperscript{63} Coussons, “Thirty Years,” 40-71. \textit{Mercury}, Feb. 5, 9, 17, Mar. 31, Apr. 1, 9, 1831; July 8, 1929; Apr. 13, July 26, Dec. 15, 1830; Apr. 16, June 9, 1831; Feb. 8, May 28, 1832; Feb. 3, 12, 19, 24, Mar. 11, Apr. 16, July 7, 9, 12, Aug. 2, 26, 1831. See also Jan. 21, 28, 29, Feb. 4, June 7, 8, 10, 18-23, 1831; Jan. 21, 28, 1833.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Mercury}, 21 Oct. 1833. Since the \textit{Mercury} supported disunion as a result of the Force Bill, they devoted many, many editorials to the subject. See Sept. 25, 30, Oct. 3, 5, 8, 14, 21, Nov. 2, 4, Dec. 2, 1833; Jan 1, 4, 8 11, 13, 14, 15, Feb. 10, 12, 22, Mar. 3, 4, Apr. 2, 1834. Further, July 4, Aug. 5, Oct. 21, 29, 1833; Feb. 3, 12, Mar. 7, 10, Apr. 1, 23, 25, May 1, 2, 10, 15, 17, 20, July 7, Oct. 20, Nov. 4, 6, 11, 1834; Jan. 14, 16, 17, 19, Mar. 26, June 3, 1835.

"Good School" of thought, popularized by Calhoun in an 1837 speech before the Senate. As opposed to Jefferson's "Necessary Evil School," these thinkers claimed that slavery was actually *positively good* for both whites and enslaved blacks. The institution of slavery was wildly productive and profitable (or so these people thought) for whites and trained black slaves in the ways of civilization, offering them far better lives than were possible in heathen, uncivilized Africa.

Readers of the *Mercury* were presented with a version of American slavery as benevolent and wondrous as though Africans had been welcomed to a new Eden by their captors and auctioneers. Though even John C. Calhoun had, early in his political career, intimated that not only was the slave trade an inhuman tragedy, but slavery itself, he thought, was a moral curse, an unfortunate yet necessary evil which the South should attempt to eradicate. After the Missouri Crisis and with ever-increasing protective tariffs, however, Calhoun and the *Mercury* began to reexamine their philosophical positions regarding the institution and began quite explicitly rebuking their liberal past. Slavery was, by the mid-1820s, being lauded throughout the South as a boon to commercial development, advancing standards-of-living, and a great promoter of social stability. Rather than the Jeffersonian certainty of the evil of slavery, or even the timid half-answers of Turnbull on the question, the early *Mercury* wholeheartedly endorsed the institution as

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66 Though there are too many examples of this regular practice to note them all, see "Meeting of Storekeepers," *The Southern Patriot*, August 4, 1835; "[No Headline.]
*The Southern Patriot*, August 6, 1835; "To the Public," *The Southern Patriot*, August 14, 1835 for three wonderful examples all relating to the censorship of abolitionist mails discussed at the opening of this essay. The last example is particularly telling as it is an open letter from a group of packet shippers who carry the mails into Charleston assuring readers that the shippers are staunchly anti-abolitionist and entirely disavow any abolitionist literature unfortunately delivered to Charleston harbor by said packet company. The *Patriot's* decisions to publish such letters clearly indicate it's support for censorship in a passive way while editorials indicate such support in a robustly positive manner. For Calhoun's exposition of the "Positive Good" argument, see John C. Calhoun, "Slavery a Positive Good," speech before the US Senate, 6 February, 1837.
no less than a blessing from God.67

On August 5, 1828, a reader styling himself “A Friend to Truth,” published an article in which he attempted to devise a statistical, utilitarian justification for slavery. Not only was the slave’s condition improved by enslavement, but the white community benefited as well. Slave labor, he found through his complex calculations, was actually far more efficient than free labor, producing greater profits in both agriculture and manufacturing. Slaves should not be confined to the fields, of course, but could be used as excellent factory workers as well, producing all sorts of goods while doing the dangerous and degrading work in all realms of industry. Yet, if whites’ preferences would be fulfilled by such an arrangement, what of the slaves”? “A Friend to Truth” enlightens us, echoing John Taylor of Caroline and other transitionary liberals: "His [a slave's] situation is better off, by far, than that of the working classes of Europe, or of the miserable free people of colour at the North. Without the care of maintaining himself and family, the Carolina slave lives, not to think, but to eat, drink, and be merry.”68 By 1833, it was stated that "As to Southern sentiment on the subject of Slavery, so far from Slavery being considered an evil, and the Southern people only regretting the difficulty of removing it, they deny that it is an evil."69 The paramount evil, of course, was represented in those who would destroy the new Eden of southern slavery:

The people of the South...do not, as the moderate Abolitionists affect to suppose, consider Slavery as an evil.--They regard it as a benefit; they are convinced that the condition of the labouring class in this part of the Union is better with, than it would be without, the institution, which they have resolved to perpetuate. And we repeat...that when an actual interference from abroad takes place, it will be met by action, not by words.--If it come from private persons, they will be made the subjects of just, summary, and exemplary

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68 Mercury, 5 Aug., 1828.
69 Mercury, 3 July, 1833.
punishment. If it come from Government, that Government will be renounced, and the Union abandoned.\textsuperscript{70}

Northerners, despite their rhetoric, cared nothing for the actual welfare of the slaves, just like they cared nothing for their own laboring classes--including the wretched free blacks of the slums. Southern paternalists, however, were the only true tribunes of black well-being, the \textit{Mercury} claimed. Carolinians would defend their slaves to the death, no matter how old and useless they may have become, because they were considered quasi-family, and shared bonds deeper than the cold, rational, calculating hearts of northerner manufacturers could comprehend. "It follows irresistibly [sic] from these premises," the \textit{Mercury} began its stunning reversal of the Jeffersonian "Necessary Evil School, "that it is \textit{the true interest of all parties}, that the negroes should remain for the present in the condition in which Providence has \textit{here} placed them, and that all attempts at the North, \textit{directly or indirectly}, to change their condition, can be productive only of evil."\textsuperscript{71}

By 1831, David Walker’s famous “Appeal,” William Lloyd Garrison’s \textit{The Liberator}, and Nat Turner’s rebellion--which left dozens of whites dead, including women and children--had each hit the South with crushing blows to that soft center of southern life, slavery. Southerners in turn rallied behind the planter class to protect their peculiar institution, and the \textit{Mercury} did not wait on the sidelines. Defending slavery with the one hand, the \textit{Mercury} used the other to bludgeon those who would turn loose unruly, bloodthirsty savages on their enlightened paternalists. Garrison was attacked as a fanatic, abolitionists were called treasonous and desirous of bloodshed, and right-thinking

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Mercury}, 21 Oct., 1833.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Mercury}, 22 Aug. 1834.
northerners were implored to clamp down on such seedy elements in the fiercest manner possible. The *Mercury* reported northern reactions to such demands regularly:

The Mayor of Boston, when remonstrated...on this subject, replied 'that all considerate men at the North, condemned these proceedings but there was no law to prevent or punish them.' Now if there be no such laws, why are they not passed?...The attempt to do this, or even the manifestation of a disposition to effect it on the part of our Northern brethren, would do more to revive kind feelings, and cement our union, than any single measure, except, perhaps, a repeal of the Tariff.\(^72\)

More laws were needed, proclaimed the *Mercury*, curtailing freedom of speech and of the press, to slay the abolition demon. There is nothing unconstitutional, reasoned the paper, about such state laws, so there should be no hesitation about writing and enacting them with great vengeance. The southern preoccupation with constitutionality, as opposed to Jeffersonian liberalism, enabled such breaches of rights. "Let public opinion and the Laws put down these attacks on us and on the Constitution,” an editorial proclaimed, “let their public prints cease to abuse us, and as far as possible render us odious abroad and in the confederation--and we then may believe that nobody is inclined to injure us but a few fanatics."\(^73\)

The South was always presented by the *Mercury* as the innocent victim of incendiarism. On 9 July, 1834, anti-abolitionist riots erupted at Chatham Street Chapel in New York City as a northern mob attempted to disperse a Tappan Brothers abolitionist rally. The event sparked interest throughout the country, not least of which from Charleston and the *Mercury*.\(^74\) "These difficulties have grown out of the NEGRO QUESTION," the pages of the *Mercury* fumed. Abolitionist meddling has gone

\(^{72}\) *Mercury*, 23 Sept., 3 Oct., 1831. This quote is especially telling as it shows once again that free trade is of far less importance than proslavery to the *Mercury*.

\(^{73}\) *Mercury*, 8 May, 1833.

unchecked for decades, and foolish egalitarians ignorantly cling to equality of the races.
"Every reflecting man must know that it would be quite as easy for 'the Ethiopem [sic] to
change his skin, or the Leopard his spots,' as to remove the broad line which now separates
the blacks from the whites. And yet this was the Quixotic attempt of TAPPAN and his
associates in N York." The fault lied with the agitators who challenged the morality of
slavery, not those who would employ violence to silence their inquiries. Such riots were,
of course, considered endemic to the northern system of free labor, and the South was
largely immune to such upheavals thanks entirely to slavery. Because the lowest order of
laborers in the South consisted of non-citizen property, displays of whatever force deemed
necessary, military or otherwise, needed no justifications. Tyranny could only be exerted
over citizens of the state, and slaves were no citizens, possessed no civil rights or
liberties.

In fact, tyranny—as Jefferson and liberals like him would have characterized it—was
acceptable to the Mercury in certain circumstances. Perhaps military oppression against
white citizens was too much to bear, but legislative tyranny was perfectly acceptable,
especially during the mails controversy of 1835. While William Leggett was being reborn
as an antislavery firecracker, the Mercury was advocating a slew of rather draconian
measures against the abolitionists. Though opposed to the mob action of burning the
abolitionist mails, the Mercury pressed for congressional legislation to prevent such mails

75 Mercury, 21 July, 22 Aug., 1834. Interestingly, the Mercury still displays some clear elements of
Jeffersonian liberalism—elements which were still quite common in the general population—such as a distaste
for standing armies and military operations against civilians: “A wholesome jealousy of military power,
forbids the use of the rifle and the musket, against unarmed Citizens. A more fatal blow could not be given
to the liberties of this country, than the frequent use of the soldiery, whether consisting of hired troops, or an
armed militia, in the suppression of riots. Any state of things which shall make this necessary, will prove
that the days of our liberty are numbered.”

76 Mercury, 22 Aug., 1834
from being delivered, and, after recognizing that South Carolina already had such laws in place for her citizens, urged northern states to follow suit and limit access to the public mails. A letter to the editor suggested the law one reader had in mind: Tappan and his fellows "have rendered themselves despicable to us, and deserve (instead of being patronised [sic] by Southern Merchants,) to become the subjects of LYNCH'S LAW."77

Some of the clearest proslavery thought of the early *Mercury* is readily offered to readers in the wake of the mails crisis. As noted, the burning of the pamphlets was considered premature, but premature *merely*. The spirit of the act, indeed, was wholeheartedly endorsed: "We believe that those who broke open the Post Office have erred, but none can blame their feelings or motives, which have the sympathy of the entire community." As the Charleston Vigilance Committee was formed to combat incendiarism through unofficial local action, the *Mercury* appointed itself the intellectual vanguard. Hopefully violence would not be done in South Carolina--for it should only occur in those areas which have refused to legislate against the agitation--but "If the Law squeamishly forbears to make incendiarism crime, honest impulse must deal summarily with the midnight incendiary, taken in the very act."78 When violence did have to be perpetrated in the South, Vigilance Committees were presented as the heroes who upheld public virtue and justice. When an abolitionist preacher was caught attempting to distribute materials in Tennessee, he was captured, tried by the Committee--most certainly not a jury of his peers--and granted a light sentence: "had it not been for the prudence and firmness of the Committee, his life would have been the immediate forfeit of his crime. As it was, he escaped with the infliction of twenty stripes upon his bare back--and an order

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to leave the place in 24 hours.”

When Leggett emerged from his months-long study of abolitionism and began to champion the cause, the *Mercury*, rather than reprint his editorials and counter them, decided on a media blackout of the *Evening Post*, and attempted to convince other South Carolina papers to follow suit. Not once did it attempt to engage in a serious debate about the conflict between Jeffersonian liberalism (to which the *Mercury* still pretended) and a positive endorsement of slavery. Instead, the *Mercury* rejoiced that "The *Courier* [of Charleston] has very properly stopped its exchange with the New York Evening *Post*, which has run up the black flag. We presume that our Post-Masters and Committees of Vigilance, will also take care to stop its circulation in the South." Upon discovering an abolitionist pamphlet entitled “Human Rights,” the *Mercury* once and for all truly broke with its Jeffersonian heritage:

The title of one of the pamphlets, spawned by the abolitionists, reminds us that the first person who ever lectured on 'human rights,' was the Devil, when he tempted Eve. The bible tells us nothing of the rights of man, but much of his duties...The first proposition set forth in the Declaration of Independence as a self-evident truth,' is so contrary to all divine revelation, and human testimony, that it looks much more like self-evident falsehood.

Southernism, marked by such proslavery-inspired rejections of Jeffersonian liberalism--had truly taken over the pages of the *Mercury*.

Intensifying the transition to Southernism from liberalism was *The Southern Patriot*, a Charleston newspaper edited by Jacob Cardozo, a Sephardic Jew who wrote fairly extensively on political economy. Cardozo was a Classical economist in the British tradition. Historian of economic thought Paul Conkin states that "Cardozo...rivaled

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80 *Mercury*, 4, 15, Sept., 1835.
[Daniel] Raymond and Henry C. Carey in originality. [He] achieved this, not by breaking completely with the tradition of Say and Ricardo, but by making major and often prophetic revisions of theory within that tradition." One such revision of Ricardo, for example, was rejecting the Smithian Labor Theory of Value. Most significantly, however, he was an early economic empiricist and central planner, who thought that, given the proper information, structure, and managers, economic productivity could be maximized. It was this management mentality that separated Cardozo from his more liberal contemporaries, like William Leggett. He continued this split with Jeffersonian liberals throughout the Jacksonian period by challenging the Jacksonian creed on banking. According to Conkin, "He resented extreme Jacksonian attacks on the Bank of the United States and distrusted anarchic private banking, but later supported Van Buren's subtreasury plan...Cardozo's views even on economic issues shifted through time and according to context." Cardozo's paper, The Southern Patriot, illustrates further his breaches of Jeffersonian laissez-faire and demonstrates clearly the shift of southern philosophical concerns from maintaining a liberal state and society to utilizing the political structure first and foremost to protect slavery, an institution Cardozo viewed as a positive good and the cornerstone of southern prosperity. The fact that Cardozo’s Patriot shared these illiberal tendencies in common with the Mercury becomes far more important after recognizing that it largely played the role of Charleston’s opposition paper, the main challenger to the Mercury.

The Southern Patriot provided its readers with a fairly firm laissez-faire critique of politics and policies throughout the 1830s, 40s, and 50s. As with all more-or-less stalwart Jacksonians, Cardozo presented his readers with a measured set of attacks against the Bank.

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82 Conkin, Prophets of Prosperity, 135-141.
of the United States, though he clearly was not as hostile to it as the radical *laissez-faire* free banking advocates associated with the New York Locofocos. Cardozo's major problem with the Bank was a lack of effective oversight and enforcement. When the Bank suspended specie payments after the Panic of 1837, the *Patriot* lashed out against such actions, holding firm to the position that nothing short of full and immediate resumption of specie payments was consonant with the protection of property rights and sound banking. Resumption would prevent a crumbled economy from resorting to the monopolistic notes of the Bank of the United States, ensuring greater competition.\(^83\)

Cardozo's vehement support of competition permeated most of the *Patriot*'s economic editorials. Reprinting from a Scottish paper, the *Patriot* preached the benefits of competition over monopoly:

> Competition makes Steam Packets and rail ways and carries you a couple of hundred miles in a few hours. Monopoly calls those things mischievous and dangerous inventions, and laments that the good old times have passed away, when people were a fortnight in travelling [sic] from London to York, and made their wills before they set off...Competition is a public benefactor. Monopoly is a public robber...Competition, in short, is the soul which animates and invigorates the whole social body. Monopoly is death, turning it into a lifeless and disgusting mass of corruption.\(^84\)

Cardozo's enthusiasm for free trade was not quite so intense as his antimonopolism, however. While pronouncing that "I hate the *principle* of [the system of protective tariffs], and abhor the selfish *spirit* by which it is sustained," he did not reject the economic policy of protectionism *per se*.\(^85\) Rather, Cardozo was most concerned with the *particulars* of the tariff legislation. Clearly, *The Southern Patriot* was a less *laissez-faire*

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\(^83\) "[No Headline]," *The Southern Patriot*, March 13, 1834; "[No Headline]." March 29, 1838.

\(^84\) "Competition and Monopoly," *The Southern Patriot*, April 12, 1838.

\(^85\) "For the Southern Patriot: the Bond," *The Southern Patriot*, October 11, 1831.
source than even the early *Mercury*, much less Turnbull:

The leading opponents and supporters of exorbitant protecting duties go to every extreme.--The one would throw the whole burden of Government on the South--while the other would annihilate manufactures, and have an entire and unqualified abandonment of the protective policy. The one is unremitting in their efforts to deprive the South of all advantage, and drive her to desperation--while the South leaves nothing untried to harass and exasperate the North, by demands not comporting with reason or equity.  

Protection is not, therefore, wrong in principle, but the manner in which the particular aspects of the current tariff operates is errant and destructive of southern prosperity. Gutting protectionism could only result in the annihilation of industry, according to this nascent Southerner, and as long as the balance of interests was not upset, free trade could and should be curbed.

More notable are the differences between Cardozo's *Southern Patriot* and Turnbull's "The Crisis" regarding nullification and disunionism, a topic addressed primarily during the Nullification Crisis of 1831-1832. Cardozo stood absolutely opposed to both. Arguments advanced against nullification were many and varied, ranging from questions of political tactics to high theory. Theoretically, nullification as enacted by South Carolina was said to be illegitimate for several reasons. First, *The Southern Patriot* noted that sovereignty rests with the people, not the states, and therefore the only legitimate nullifying bodies are conventions elected specially by the people, not the state legislatures. This statement drew upon long-established revolutionary ideals and practices lauded by liberals and conservatives alike. Further, the *Patriot* asserted that true Jeffersonian nullification could only be done by a body of states arrayed with a

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86 "For the Southern Patriot:  Our Differences," April 23, 1832.
common purpose against an illegitimate law that affects all parties to the compact.

Jefferson’s and Turnbull’s versions of nullification were vastly different theories, Cardozo held, because Jefferson’s was a remedy for the whole people—that is, national and based in the general welfare—while Turnbull’s was provincial and interest-based. The Patriot, then, attempted to maintain association with Jeffersonian states' rights theory while interpreting its applications extremely narrowly and smearing proponents of a broader version of Jeffersonian nullification as old Hartford Federalists, the hated and disgraced enemies of the South who threatened secession over various aspects of the War of 1812.

On the practicality of nullification, however, The Southern Patriot is even more contentious. First and foremost, nullification would have had the effect of fracturing a coalition united against the tariff, Cardozo claimed, resulting in the coalition being "thrown into confusion, and the confidence of its [the tariff] advocates in other sections of the Union, [being] strengthened." Careful to maintain its image as one of the leaders in this anti-tariff coalition, the State Rights and Union Party—with which Cardozo identified—clearly declared their opposition:

Resolved, That we consider the present Tariff law of the United States, a burdensome, unwise, and an unequal system of taxation—operating with especial hardship on the people of this, and other Southern States; whose peculiar industry demands Free Trade, and an untrammelled [sic] interchange of commodities with all nations.

The nullifiers, the Patriot claimed, were merely seeking political gains through radical, misguided action. "The true secret of all this, sooner or later, must come forth," mused

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88 "Meeting of the State Rights and Union Party," The Southern Patriot, October 26, 1831; "For the Southern Patriot: the Bond," The Southern Patriot, October 11, 1831; Kruman, Between Authority and Liberty; "[No Headline]," The Southern Patriot, March 21, 1832; "[No Headline]," The Southern Patriot, July 31, 1832.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
Cardozo, "It is not that the people may be pacified or relieved; it is not that our oppressions are bitter or our case hopeless; but it is that a few desperate politicians...have become reckless because they are desperate, and until they are stripped of all...influence...[they] will never cease with their heartless contrivances and machinations."91

More problematic, however, was the fact that South Carolina stood alone in nullifying the tariff and no other states were willing to join her. Further, the Patriot noted that Jefferson himself considered nullification a serious step not to be engaged in lightly. Nullification was merely a step removed from secession, which would likely result in war, with the likelihood only increasing over time. The horror of horrors, civil war, could be the bloody results of such careless chest-puffery, and Cardozo's Southern Patriot wanted to avoid it at all costs.92

On the subject of slavery, The Southern Patriot was even more vociferously and, at times, violently proslavery than Robert Turnbull, though it did not quite match the Mercury’s level of bloodlust. In a reply to the New York American, the Patriot claimed that slavery was necessary for the productivity and wealth of the South and exhorted the New Yorkers: "Until the American [sic] demonstrates, from the facts of history, that society will improve, 'morally, politically, and economically,' from abolition, the South will not take the teachers of its conscience and the instructors of its interests from the North."93 While such claims do indeed, technically, admit the possibility of convincing Cardozo's Patriot of the evils of slavery, such an argument would require recourse not to Jeffersonian Natural Law, but utilitarian empiricism. Rather than concern itself with

91 "[No Headline]," The Southern Patriot, March 2, 1832; "[No Headline]," The Southern Patriot, October 3, 1832.
92 "For the Southern Patriot: the Bond," The Southern Patriot, October 11, 1831.
questions of natural rights, the *Patriot* was concerned merely with accruing the greatest balance of benefits versus harms: a new system of measurement for a new intellectual paradigm.

The *Patriot* was also more anti-Jeffersonian than Turnbull (though, again, not the *Mercury*) in its support of civil rights and liberties restrictions for antislavery agitators, who were taken to be mere rhetorical tricksters, bewildering hapless, perhaps well-meaning dupes into following them. The abolition menace was a foolish and infectious philosophy dangerous to both northerners and southerners, which was spreading all the time.\(^9^4\) Intellectually vacuous individuals, the *Patriot* held, liked to feel as though they were a part of a meaningful movement, so abolitionist literature had the potential to act on the South as a poisonous fog, spreading from house to house through any open window. The *Patriot* supported full closure of any and all of those windows. Congress should have been forbidden to even discuss the subject of slavery as "Every new debate on such a theme stimulates the activity of the leaders in and abetters [sic] of the system of agitation." The "dangerous quackery," of abolitionism must be rooted out and destroyed.\(^9^5\) Once again, preservation of southern interests and the stability of the Union preempt free and open discussion in the national legislature. Slavery was, indeed, considered by the *Patriot* to be the cornerstone of the Constitution, the glue holding otherwise antagonistic sections, the North and the South, together:

Do away with slavery and the Constitution ceases to exist. No! carry out, says

\(^{9^4}\) "[No Headline.]" *The Southern Patriot*, August 6, 1835.

\(^{9^5}\) "[No Headline.]" *The Southern Patriot*, August 8, 1835. The editors later reason, however, that this advise should be mollified slightly--notably after Henry Clay, political opponent of Cardozo's Jacksonian Democrats, took it upon himself to suggest immediately tabling all petitions seeking abolition in the District of Columbia. The *Patriot* then reasons that such tactics would only serve to fuel northern rage, increasing the rate and intensity of abolitionist agitation. "Charleston, Thursday Afternoon, January 4," *The Southern Patriot*, January 4, 1838.
the American [the New York paper referred to above], the intention of its framers, by abolishing that which makes it peculiarly a Compact or Constitution between sections of the country having essentially dissimilar interests, and then you will complete the design of those who intended it as a permanent law for the American people. Can sophistry invent any thing more weak? Can ingenuity in a bad cause deduce a more lame and impotent conclusion from insufficient premises?96

The Patriot also advised silencing private individuals using the force of government—the exact brand of government action Jefferson's Kentucky Resolutions were designed to protect against.97 In fact, abolitionist literature was considered so potentially dangerous to domestic tranquility in the South that the Patriot considered it to be seditious. Northerners were thus implored to put all necessary pressures on the abolitionists to see that they did not endanger the Union as well as southern institutions. The Patriot thus cleverly associated the nullifiers, so hated by Cardozo and northerners alike, with the abolitionists. Root out the abolitionist menace in the North, and northerners and nationalists in the South could together destroy two threats shared in common.98

The effects of the slavery issue on the politics of The Southern Patriot are especially noteworthy as it was the slavery question that prompted the Patriot to cleanly and completely break with the Democratic Party in the 1848 presidential election, thus effectively choosing the proslavery cause over the cause of laissez-faire. The Van Burenite Free Soil Party, dedicated to preserving the national territories for free labor (as opposed to welcoming slave labor) and promoting laissez-faire, represented the

96 "The New-York American of the 22d Inst, Contains a Reply to Our Article in Which We affirmed it as a Novel Pretension," The Southern Patriot, August 27, 1835.
97 While Jefferson's resolutions aimed to prevent violations of the First Amendment by the national government, it is important to remember that state governments could indeed legislate limitations on the exercise of free speech at this period in American history. However, as the reader will note, the Patriot is supporting silencing abolitionists by denying them access to the postal service, a service entirely within the jurisdiction of the national government. Effectively then, there is no difference between the kind of limitations Jefferson fought in the Sedition Act and the censorship advocated by The Southern Patriot.
98 "[No Headline,]" The Southern Patriot, August 6, 1835.
culmination of antebellum Jeffersonian thought, and The Southern Patriot forthrightly rejected it, along with the “popular sovereignty” Democratic northerner, Lewis Cass, choosing to favor the proslavery Whig, Zachary Taylor, instead.

The Patriot earlier presented Van Buren as a slayer of abolitionist demons and one who desired only to see the Union preserved by not antagonizing the slave question. "So soon as his Inaugural Address was made," it was claimed in June of 1840, the peak of Van Buren's failed reelection campaign against William Henry Harrison, "it struck at the heart of the Agitators and their plans. Their weapons fell from their hands. Their oratory was dumb. Their inventive powers were paralyzed. Their presses became mute. He dealt them a blow from which they have not yet rallied and recovered." Rarely, to be sure, was Van Buren, best known for his political machinations and wizardry, portrayed in such an heroic light. Yet his leadership in quelling the brief movement to abolish slavery in Washington, D.C. warmly commended him in the minds of most slaveholders. "Who now sees an abolition paper or pamphlet or picture?" asked the Patriot. "The fell spirit--the demon of agitation, has been exorcised, at least for a time. We owe this public blessing to the open, manly declaration of a Northern Man with Southern principles, that at all hazards he will maintain those peculiar privileges of the South which are among the guarantees of the Constitution." Perhaps like no president before him, Van Buren was idolized as a hero to slaveholders and Cardozo's Patriot declared that "the South owes to Mr. Van Buren a lasting debt of gratitude. She is bound to him for having given her new guarantees for the safety of her institutions and for the security of the life and property

99 "Mr. Van Buren and Slavery," The Southern Patriot, June 11, 1840.
100 Ibid.
which their preservation involves."\textsuperscript{101} Almost never was Van Buren's spotless record as a \textit{laissez-faire} president praised.

Yet by 1848, Van Buren had disavowed the Slave Power that had taken hold of his Democracy and sought to confine slavery to its present boundaries, forbidding the extension of the institution to any United States territories, specifically the territories gained as a result of the Mexican-American War. Van Buren's rather weak Free Soil Party, however, was opposed by both Democrat Lewis Cass (who favored "popular sovereignty," or letting the population of the territories vote on the slavery issue) and the Whig Zachary Taylor, who supported extending slavery in the territories (though admittedly, Taylor's actual position remained fairly unclear during the election). Taylor, a southern slaveholder himself, appealed to weakly \textit{laissez-faire}, strongly proslavery southerners like Cardozo and his \textit{Southern Patriot} far more than either Cass or Van Buren. The \textit{Southern Patriot}, then, became a Taylor paper, trumpeting "Old Rough and Ready's" virtues and Cass and Van Buren's vices.\textsuperscript{102}

To the \textit{Patriot}, the worst part of Cass was his supposed lack of ideological firmness, and best part of Taylor was his appeal as a nationalist--a \textit{proslavery} nationalist: "Old Zac is no Southern man, or Northern or Eastern or Western man, but he is a United States' man, and will do justice to all parts of the Union.--Then come on, boys; better times are coming when he's made President."\textsuperscript{103} The supposed partisan hack, Cass, however, was vastly overshadowed in the \textit{Patriot}'s visceral rhetoric by the turncoat, Van Buren, and his Free Soilers, who "have now drawn a line, which, for the first time, openly divides the

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{102} "Going Ahead," \textit{The Southern Patriot}, July 15, 1848.  
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
two great industrial portions of the country."\textsuperscript{104} Van Buren's decision to run for the presidency in 1848 in a party which avowed stealing the national territories from the equal enjoyment of slaveholders was supposed to have rent the Democracy in two, further drained antislavery votes from both major parties, and, above all, antagonized sectional conflict like never before. The \textit{Patriot} apparently expected such behavior, however, from \textit{laissez-faire}, Jeffersonian radicals like them. Cardozo's \textit{Patriot} said the Free Soilers were,

\begin{quote}
Standing on ground peculiar to themselves--anti-national, because its [the party's] very nature excludes a general and national concurrence--they have avowed principles which shake the foundation of our government, and profess purposes utterly at war with the peace, if not the existence of our people.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

Though the Van Burenites' past efforts were to be lauded, only proslavery nationalism, \textit{both} elements quite anti-Jeffersonian, could adequately protect the interests which were most important to \textit{The Southern Patriot}.

\textbf{A New Southern Paradigm:  The Late Mercury, The New Orleans Democratic Presses, and the Death of Southern Jeffersonian Liberalism}

By the late 1830s, the Charleston \textit{Mercury} had irrevocably severed itself from Jeffersonianism. The most interesting and telling example of this shift and continuing trend in the \textit{Mercury} is that of foreign policy. Slavery was the guiding force behind the foreign policy advocated by the \textit{Mercury}. It supported the annexation of Texas from the beginning of the Texan revolution, and vehemently opposed American intervention in the Canadian revolution, or Patriot War. As Texas was a land of slaveholders and Canada was not, the \textit{Mercury} quite easily navigated its way around a potential contradiction. In

\textsuperscript{104} "Taylor Meeting." \textit{The Southern Patriot}, July 21, 1848.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
both cases, peoples were rising up against a government they considered oppressive, yet the *Mercury* advocated only that intervention which would benefit slaveholders.\textsuperscript{106}

Agitation to annex Texas began early in the pages of the *Mercury*. Van Buren, adamantly opposed annexation because it would likely cause a war with Mexico, hesitated to extend the grasp of the plantation elite as well. Recognizing this, the *Mercury* continued campaigning, keeping no secrets about their motivations: "The very reasons so intemperately urged by the North against it, that it will increase the political weight of the Southern States, and perpetuate and extend the 'curse' of Slavery,--are our best reasons for it." The element of race was also critical in establishing the Texans’ cause as just. Because Mexico was considered a backward country populated by a backward race, the American stock of rebels in Texas was to be supported and lauded. "Resolved," the *Mercury* declared, "That the people of this State have witnessed with profound interest the gallant struggle of the people of Texas to emancipate themselves from the dominion of Mexico; and hail with heartfelt gratification and pride their admission into the family of independent nations."\textsuperscript{107}

When Candadian rebels rose against British rule in 1837, they were badly beaten. A band of stragglers took a fortified position on Navy Island in the Niagra River. On 29 December, 1837, the American steamer *Caroline*, staffed with Americans sympathetic to the revolutionaries and eager to support their cause with munitions, was attacked and destroyed by British forces. The incident, which included a British invasion of American

territory as well as the destruction of the ship, fueled northern cries for war. The Charleston Mercury, however, urged the exact opposite. Yes, Canadian patriots were fighting an imperial power just as were the Texans, but Great Britain was “an enlightened and liberal Government,” whereas, “In Texas, settlers from the United States have resisted the tyranny of bigotry and barbarism, and are contending for the spread of civilization and pure Republican institutions.” The Texas rebels were too similar in mind and spirit for the South to abandon them. The Mercury gave its strongest, most earnest, and important reason for aiding and annexing Texas and for non-intervention in Canada by appealing to stock southern states’ rights arguments:

What similarity is there between the two cases. The Texians [sic] constituted one of a confederacy of States— that confederacy was broken up by a civil war in which a soldier of fortune seized the government, and turned it into a despotism. They seceded as a State, in a case where there was no denying that the fundamental principles of the compact had been forcibly overturned. They owned the soil which they occupied, not merely as individuals, but as a State...Who now are the Canadian 'Patriots!' A faction, who have risen up against every local authority of a long established and peaceable government; who hold three hundred acres of land by tenure of robbery, and which they could not maintain three days without the aid of people who must break alike the laws of nations and of their own country to furnish that aid.

Intervention in Texas was taken to be a matter of supporting the states’ rights cause, a cause which was being put to use by the South to enhance the position of slavery in the Republic on many fronts, not the least of which was the battle to annex a new slave state while preventing any annexations of free territories from Canada or otherwise bolstering northern wealth and power.108 Jefferson’s territorial expansion— itself an act which alienated the president from his most ardently liberal followers— was for the cause of

108 For more information on the Caroline Affair and its effects on American foreign policy, see Howard Jones, To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty: A Study in Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1843 (University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Mercury, Jan. 3, 18, 19, Dec. 21, 29, 1837.
extending the reach of republican liberty and yeoman farming, not the creation of an imperial slavocracy, as the *Mercury* and other Southernists like Beverly Tucker, came to desire in the 1840s and 1850s.

As if to cement this shift from Jeffersonian liberalism to Southernism, John C. Calhoun, supported by the pages of the *Mercury*, attempted to forge a South-West alliance against the interests of the North, swapping tariff reform for various internal improvements projects in the West as well as pet western protective measures. Calhoun twisted his constitutional theory around such an alliance with little difficulty, simply maintaining that the Mississippi was properly viewed as an inland sea, and therefore the federal government could legally promote construction projects on the river as part of ensuring coastal defenses. He just as easily supported land grants to railroads and lower land prices to ease western settlement, though both would mean distortions in the market and, in the case of the railroads, the emergence of true American corporatism. When President Polk vetoed the internal improvements, the West bolted the shaky alliance and the South was once again left to defend itself. Among the fiercest defenders in the South were the Democratic presses of New Orleans.

Antebellum New Orleans was a city of many interests and great wealth. As the "capital city" of the Old South, New Orleans was the funnel through which most of the product of the South and West passed on its way to world markets, fueling industrial revolutions and, more importantly for our purposes here, sectional antagonisms that precipitated the American Civil War. As a thriving commercial center, the city was home to significant moneyed interests and consequently became a bastion of Whiggish economic
thought, departing from the Jeffersonian tradition of *laissez-faire* in favor of quasi-mercantilism. Founded in 1718 by the French, New Orleans became the first Deep South slave society with a planter class that came to rule through a level of aristocratic wealth and power rivaled by no other North American city save Charleston, South Carolina.\(^{110}\) In New Orleans, the intellectual separation from Jeffersonian liberalism became complete, and readers of the New Orleans *Jeffersonian Republican, Jeffersonian, Picayune*, and the *Courier* can clearly see the creation of a new paradigm of "Southernism," or a school of thought which placed mercantile, proslavery interests above abstract notions of natural, equal human rights and *laissez-faire* political economy.

In the January 25, 1837 inaugural issue of the *Picayune*, the paper declared firmly its intentions to be a nationalist, proslavery mouthpiece which would engage in matters of politics but lightly. The *Picayune* was a Calhounite paper, which is to say that it supported the Democratic Party in most cases, but significantly broke with it on issues of executive power and political economy. "Mr. Calhoun, at this time, as he has done on all other occasions, looks above the shackles of party," the *Picayune* asserted, "and battles solely for constitutional principles, and the interest and prosperity of the whole country. Mr. Calhoun will not desert the South, nor the institutions of our country. He has already expressed himself opposed to the sub-treasury scheme, the darling of locofocos and office holders."\(^{111}\) In the realm of political economy, the *Picayune* condemned the most Jeffersonian party in national politics, the New York Locofocos, or Equal Rights Party, a group of radical anti-monopoly, anti-national bank, antislavery Van Burenites.

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The Locofocos, intellectually led by William Leggett—who also largely devised Van Buren's Subtreasury substitute for a national bank—were castigated as pie-in-the-sky idealists who spend too much time pondering the time-worn ideas of French liberals and too little time contemplating gritty, utilitarian reality, so familiar to New Orleans' mercantile readership: "Leggett has been reading the politics of Milton and fifth monarchy men--Bryant [owner of the New York *Evening Post*] studying the theories of Turgot and the French economists. Availing themselves of the floating materials in a large city, they have endeavored to subvert the maxims of experience, and upset the rules drawn from years of practice." Regarding Locofoco proposals to eliminate monopolistic bank incorporation, the *Picayune* claims that "Their notions about the currency are the wildest visions ever engendered. We must have a credit system and a national bank, and there is no use in disguising it." Jefferson, of course, despised the idea of a national bank, famously stating that such an institution would be more harmful to liberty than standing armies. "We ourself [sic] are sufficiently locofoco for all practical purposes," the *Picayune* wryly commented, which is to say, they were not Locofoco in the least.112

So viscerally opposed to Leggett's band of *laissez-faire* radicals was the *Picayune*, that the paper expended considerable editorial space excoriating President Van Buren for appointing the chronically infirm Leggett as American ambassador to the United States of Central America, stating that the appointment, "gives us pain. Not on account of his ultra political principles...but in consequence of his openly avowed and dangerous opinions regarding domestic slavery...All who know him must be also aware of the fact, that he is a violent abolition partizan [sic], which should be a bar, we think, to his advancement." Early

112 "Alas! For the Loco Focos!" *The Picayune*, July 22, 1837.
perceiving Van Buren's developing antislavery views, heavily influenced by Locofocoism, the *Picayune* continued its onslaught: "In this act of Mr. Van Buren, we recognize an utter disregard of Southern feeling, and we think we can also perceive in it a desire to conciliate Northern Abolitionists. Let it be distinctly understood that we are taking Southern, not political ground."113 Hatred for the Locofocos even extended to the militantly proslavery James K. Polk, then Speaker of the House and radical hard money advocate, opposing his speakership because he favored the Subtreasury. The *Picayune* vehemently fought against the liberal, free banking Subtreasury plan and coolly assured its mercantile readership that it would fail.114

On the subject of slavery, the New Orleans *Picayune* was extremely and violently proslavery, far more so than either Turnbull or Cardozo's *Southern Patriot*. Presenting an idealized, bucolic, Romantic vision of the slave societies in the South, the *Picayune* emphasized the humanity of slavery and the not merely coincident inhumanity of the slave.115 Attempting to poke fun at abolitionists, the *Picayune* glowingly displayed the racist roots of proslavery thought. A fictional account of a free orangutan being enslaved and brought to America was concocted, in which a group of northern abolitionists rushed to the defense of the animal. The writer proceeded to say that he joined with the abolitionists in this cause because orangutans indeed display greater intelligence than blacks and would, at least, virtuously refuse to do the menial, degrading forced work that slaves did on a daily basis. Abolitionists were thus mocked as fighting for the humanity of the sub-human, the rights of non-men.116

To the *Picayune*, of course, abolitionists are far worse than allegedly inferior blacks. Naturally, it was hoped that abolitionist material would be kept far away from the South via censorship of the mails, as "honest postmasters would rid the mails of such damnable trash." Violence was brazenly preached against abolitionist agitators. Agreeably quoting a Philadelphia editor, the *Picayune* states that those smuggling abolition materials into the South "should be caged with the hyena." Regarding abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison’s paper, *The Emancipator*, it declared that "He who would encourage the circulation of an abolition paper, ought to be scouted to the other side of the Potomac, or hung up without the benefit of clergy."

The *Picayune* showed a distinct distaste for being preached at by abolitionist moralizers who apparently were not aware of how benevolent the institution of slavery was to otherwise base and wholly uncivilized blacks. Enraged at the antislavery convention in Harrisburg sponsored by activists Arthur and Lewis Tappan, the *Picayune* stated that,

> We should like to know what amount of money they would consider sufficient to induce them to visit New Orleans, under their real names. And we should also like to have them show their d----d abolition phizes in this southern region. If the Tappans and George Thompson, (with all their infernal host of *holy traitors,* are not one day hanged, the gallows will be wronged of its rights. This is only our private opinion, publicly expressed."

Cleverly noting a degree of northern hypocrisy, the *Picayune* commented on Illinois' recent constitutional ban on free blacks entering the state. The paper noted that while southern states had similar bans, they were not *constitutional bans*, thereby lessening the illiberality of the southern practices. It is important to note, though, that the *Picayune* was not 

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118 "What A Devil!" *The Picayune*, April 14, 1837.
121 "[No Headline]," *The Picayune*, March 3, 1837.
attempting liberal one-upmanship with the North, but rather merely trying to convince northerners of the righteousness of southern slavery by illustrating the same proslavery rationales behind northern lawmaking. "Would it not become Mr. Wilmot,\textsuperscript{122}" the \textit{Picayune} derisively pondered, "to remove thither and enlighten the people of that benighted State upon the rights of man in general and black men in particular?...What a harvest for the pious labors of Garrison and the black Douglass--provided the latter gentleman were not taken \textit{damage feasant} by the constabulary."\textsuperscript{123}

On the nature of the Constitution, the legitimacy of nullification, and secession, the \textit{Picayune} stood as a firm supporter of Union \textit{for the sake of slavery}. While liberals like Leggett supported the Union so long as it protected liberal values, the \textit{Picayune} built upon the tradition forged by Turnbull, the \textit{Mercury}, the \textit{Patriot}, and others, hailing the Union as the greatest mechanism for protecting slavery ever devised (a position also held by Leggett, though he ultimately came to favor disunion for that very reason). Therefore, the New Orleans \textit{Picayune} serves as an example of a paper rejecting Jeffersonian conceptions of American government for the purposes of upholding a non-Jeffersonian institution--a combination creating quite the opposite of liberalism. The roots of such illiberality extend temporally backward to the inaugural issue of the \textit{Picayune} from January 25, 1837, in which that paper clearly declared its unequivocal love of Unionism as a tool to support slavery. The editors stated that but a small portion of the paper will be devoted to political

\textsuperscript{122} David Wilmot, a Van Burenite Democrat from Pennsylvania, became famous for his Wilmot Proviso, an amendment to a funding bill which would have banned slavery from all territories gained as a result of the Mexican-American War. The bill was introduced on August 8, 1846 and did not pass, but is often depicted as having been the touchstone igniting the period of sectional conflict because it forced northerners and southerners of each party to declare themselves at the national level on the question of slavery whereas since the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the subject had been considered closed. See Michael Holt, \textit{The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War}, (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004).

\textsuperscript{123} "The Negroes in the Free States," \textit{Daily Picayune}, April 22, 1848.
affairs,

But should the tempest of party ever wreck the PICAUYNE [sic], she will never hoist a signal of distress by an attempt to put down Union!...To those fanatical pirates that cruise under the black flag--who oppose slavery, because they are themselves the slaves of ignorance and superstition--who pretend to rub clean the upper decks of their neighbors with a holy stone--we say look out for our LONG TOM. 124

Opposing secession in the crisis over the Compromise of 1850, the Picayune held that such action would be inexpedient and dangerous. The compromise was sufficiently conciliatory to southerners to warrant acceptance. Indeed, so long as the Compromise's fugitive slave law was upheld, the Picayune saw absolutely no reason to threaten secession. 125 Once again, what truly mattered to that organization was supporting decidedly illiberal institutions, not upholding the principles of liberal constitutional government.

When secession finally came to Louisiana in 1861, the Picayune positioned itself as opposed to secession but standing in solidarity with its fellow countrymen once they resolved to secede. Opposition was rooted in the virtual certainty of civil war with the North, though it was hoped that northerners would have more sense than to engage in a potentially costly and bloody war of foreign subjugation. 126 The Picayune also thought secession would harmfully sever channels of support for southern friends in the North, "[smoothing] the path for the Black Republicans who, charging us with subverting the constitution, now seek to rally them to their aid by the delusive cry that they are the defenders of it." 127 The Union was unequivocally presented as the best hope for maintaining slavery, and, barring that, a Union of slaveholding states, as a war would cast

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125 "The Secessionists," Daily Picayune, September 18, 1850.
126 "What is Next?" Daily Picayune, January 9, 1861.
open the floodgates of potential conquest and social experimentation:

By secession we surrender our rights in the Union, and we only retain slavery in the States which the Black Republicans do not attempt to interfere with; we virtually abandon all that has been the cause of sectional dissension; we leave to the remaining States all the national wealth, the territories, the army and navy; in brief, we forfeit all the advantages we enjoyed as part of a powerful confederacy; we do not resist Northern aggression, but recede from our positions as if we had not the courage to defend it.128

Such lamentations for the loss of slaveholding empire is only paralleled in the hazy visions of the late, disunionist Beverly Tucker, and completely absent in the localist, somewhat liberal minds of Turnbull and Cardozo. To Jefferson, such relish at the potential spread of slavery was anathema.

The editorial pages of John F. H. Claiborne's Jeffersonian Republican and its daughter paper, the Jeffersonian, demonstrate the intensity of this intellectual shift quite clearly. Obviously seizing upon the Jeffersonian roots of Southernism, Claiborne presented readers with numerous examples of free trade thought and advocacy for states' rights and vastly limited federal powers. Yet Claiborne's record must be seen as dazzlingly inconsistent and his thought terribly muddled and confused if one assumes him to be any sort of Jeffersonian liberal. Only when seen within the context of growing Southernism, do the thunderings of such southern presses become intelligible. Support for free trade mixed with support for thorough violations of the most sacred points of laissez-faire, a deep devotion to the Union splashed with lust for new slaveholding states, and humanitarian concern for the welfare of blacks side-by-side with the most gutteral of racial slurs blend comfortably into the Southernist paradigm as displayed by these Louisiana papers.

128 Ibid.
As noted above, Claiborne regularly infused his issues with free trade advocacy. He was a formidable opponent of protective tariffs, and, in characteristic Southernist fashion, spent the vast majority of his editorial space dedicated to economic issues discussing the need for tariff reform. Other issues were rarely addressed, and when they were, they were given cursory treatment at best. Even the tariff was not considered the grave issue it was in South Carolina. Claiborne supported the "Warehousing System," by which merchants would have to warehouse their goods until all duties were paid in full, and only then could they be released to markets. Effectively, this measure, later adopted by the 1846 tariff, supported protectionist goals. Once again, tariffs were not considered illegitimate \textit{per se}, but harmful to very specific commercial and social interests, and only upon that basis were they condemned.

Throughout the publication of these papers, however, are glaring examples of economic interventionism and anti-\textit{laissez-faire} thought. From relatively minor issues like Claiborne's support for the Franking Privilege as a means for legislators to "enlighten" their constituents, to more serious considerations that struck even Jefferson as legitimate breaches of \textit{laissez-faire}, like support for public schools at the state and local levels, Claiborne's Southernist interventionism spanned a wide array of subjects. Concerned with losing economic and political clout to the industrializing North, Claiborne supported public education, internal improvements, and the governmental construction of light houses. In line with Calhoun's attempts at a western alliance, the \textit{Jeffersonian Republican} voiced its support for improvements projects on the Mississippi as being truly \textit{general} in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{129} See especially: \textit{Jeffersonian Republican}, 7, 18, 20, 24, 27, Jan., 1, 4, 7, 13, 15, 18, Feb., 6 June, 19 Aug., 30, Oct., 1845; \textit{Jeffersonian}, 3, 4, Sept. 1846. \textsuperscript{130} \textit{Jeffersonian Republican}, 6 Jan., 21 May, 26 June, 4, 8, 12, 18, 19, 21 Aug., 23 Sept., 17, 29, Oct. 1845; \textit{Jeffersonian}, 19, Dec., 30 Jan., 1845; 9, 14, 22, Feb., 11 April, 11, Aug., 1, Sept., 1846.}
scope. Congressional appropriations for light house construction were legitimate because "We think...that it is bad economy to make niggardly appropriations for this object. Light houses are the eyes of commerce," and commerce was the lifeblood of the blossoming West. Ultimately, the South-West alliance was grounded in southern resentment of the North and the philosophy of Southernism--the idea that protecting interests peculiar to the South was the highest priority--allowed for great deviations from laissez-faire to accomplish southern goals. "Have we no important interests at stake?" asked an earnest Jeffersonian Republican. "Is there a better place in the Union to equip a vessel or man a fleet, or to supply naval stores? Have we nothing to ask here, when so much is being annually expended at the North? We contribute the largest portion of the national revenue--shall we reap none of the advantages?" 131

In the most striking example of southern rejections of laissez-faire, perhaps of all thus far given, Claiborne and his co-editor, J. Van Ness advocated outright nationalization of Samuel Morse's latest and greatest invention, the magnetic telegraph. The Jeffersonian quotes a story on the subject from the New York Commercial, which "points out many of the disadvantages and even injuries which may be visited upon the mass of the community if the sole use and control of Magnetic Telegraph communication be vested in individuals or private companies," and proceeds to agree with the suggestion that "the right be transferred to the Government, which excludes any monopoly for improper or speculative purposes." 132

As one might expect, annexation of Texas and the question of slavery dominated

the pages of Claiborne's papers. The annexation of Texas and the cause of proslavery were considered to be one and the same, virtually interchangeable. Protecting slavery required greater political power for the slave states, which meant more of them. For Claiborne's South, anyone anti-Texas was immediately antislavery and, therefore, anti-Union. According to him, "The slave-holding States have within themselves a principle of union which is indestructible, so long as their domestic institutions last." Indeed, the greatest danger of not annexing Texas was the threat such action would pose to slavery in Louisiana. Without annexation, Texas would surely be vassalized by Great Britain, Claiborne reasoned, free labor would dominate western Texas, prompting a flood of European immigration, the abolition of Texan slavery, and a massive antislavery border with Louisiana beyond which there were no laws which could be called upon to return fugitive slaves. Here was a true threat to slavery, a threat more serious than any before it. The only proper protection would be "Texas Now and Forever." "Here is an empire at stake," Claiborne thundered to his readers. "Here is a perpetual guarantee for the security of our Union (by securing the future of slavery). Here is an unexplored and exhaustless field for production, commerce, and manufactures. Here is an opportunity of extending our free principles over one-third of a great continent at a single bound." A true slaveholding empire was within the South's grasp at last. It did not take the Jeffersonian Republican long to seek the conquest of all Mexico, saying that "it does fall legitimately within the great objects of republicanism to extend the area of freedom, and

133 Jeffersonian Republican, "Mr. Benton, and the Annexation of Texas," 30 Dec., 1844; "Texas," 8 Feb. 1845. For a broader view of these papers' thoughts regarding Texas, see the Jeffersonian Republican 10, 12, 22 Jan., 5, 8, 12, 13, 18, 24, 26, Feb., 5, 6, 8, 10, 29, March, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 22, 26, 30, April, 1 May, 4, 19 June, 4, 11, 21, 31 July, 7, 21 Aug., 8, Sept., 1845; Jeffersonian 6 Feb., 2 June, 1846.
diffuse the blessings of liberty and of peace."\textsuperscript{136}

But, of course, this future of a white republican paradise was based upon the domination of servile black labor. The blessings of American civilization were entirely dependent, so Clairborne argued, upon maintaining and indeed greatly expanding slavery. Should the annexation of Texas succeed, slavery would be extended at the risk of disunion, something which, though lamentable, would be preferable to abolition. Should annexation fail, however, it would be clear that the South was in greater danger than ever before imagined. How far, Claiborne wondered, had the abolition menace penetrated? "This faction [abolitionists]," Claiborne stated, "is a zealous and powerful auxiliary of our foreign foes, and is disposed to see slavery abolished on this continent, even though it is purchased by the blood of tens of thousands of our fellow-citizens. The safety of the South, the liberty of Texas, the prosperity of both, call imperatively for their union...[D]ivided, they must eventually fall a sacrifice to their foreign and domestic enemies." Texas and slavery were indeed taken to be both the life and death of the South.\textsuperscript{137}

Naturally, an institution thought to be so necessary to the life of the South was not scorned by the Southernist Claiborne as "a necessary evil," but rather both necessary and a positive good.\textsuperscript{138} Vigorously reprinting an attack on abolitionists from the New York \textit{Courier & Enquirer}, Claiborne clearly states the Southernist case for the morality of slavery: "It [the New York paper] falls into the great error of conceding that domestic


\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Jeffersonian Republican}, "TEXAS IS ANNEXED," 10 March, 1845; "Our Relation with Texas," 9 April, 1845.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid. 30 Dec., 1844, 6, 10, 22 Jan., 5, 8 Feb., 9, April, 21, 31 July, 1845; \textit{Jeffersonian} 6 Feb., 21 Aug., 17 Sept., 9 Oct., 1846.
slavery, as it exists among us, and every where else, is a *curse*.  This concession is of itself fatal to our rights.  Once admit it, and it justifies the very interference which the Courier opposes.  It is an ample apology for the false and mischievous philanthropy which is continually at work upon our system."  This brash claim was then followed by a torrent of reprints defending the morality of slavery from the New York *Herald*.  Slaves were said to be treated better than factory labor, despite the double-speak of the British abolitionists and manufacturers.  Further, whereas Britain's policies were likely, so said the *Republican*, to result in devastating race war, maintaining slavery prevented such calamity.  

Domestic abolitionists were not tolerated whatsoever.  When the Massachusetts legislature sent a Mr. Hubbard as an agent to New Orleans and he began preaching abolitionism, the *Jeffersonian Republican* railed:

> The Governor should be promptly invested with power to expel Mr. Hubbard, or any other agent sent here on such a mission, from the territory of Louisiana, and it should be distinctly made known that the people of this State will submit to no interference with its jurisdiction or domestic institutions, from any quarter; and that those who attempt, in person, thus to interfere hereafter, will be visited with the *most terrible penalties known to the law* (emphasis added).

After a cadre of leading citizens attempted to convince Hubbard to leave, he refused to do so, and Claiborne proclaimed "he should be expelled forthwith--*by law*."  In New Orleans, the government was being called upon to silence dissent.  Southernism, not liberalism, wholeheartedly embraced such action.  The *Jeffersonian* was even grislier.  Recounting a story in which Mississippi governor Quitman's wife and children were traveling North with a trusted slave, the slave either escaped or was forcibly removed from Quitman's service.

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139 Ibid. *"Anti-Slavery Movements in New York,"* 28 May, 1845.
Naturally, abolitionists were suspected, and the *Jeffersonian* quipped that "We propose that when the actors in this matter are made known, that they receive a *pressing* invitation to visit the State of Mississippi, and that they be very *cord*-ially received."\(^{141}\)

Upon the death of Thomas Dew, the famous proslavery intellectual, Claiborne touted him as a towering figure, heroic in his defense of slavery in the face of abolitionism. Dew's struggle to vindicate slavery as a moral and righteous institution was more important to New Orleans than ever. Indeed, the Mexican War was likely to leave a wealth of new territories to the United States, which prompted the Wilmot Proviso. In a very early report on the progress of the Proviso, the *Jeffersonian* remarked in earnest "That there is a great and growing party in this country, of every shade of political opinion, determined on *checking the extension of our slave institutions*, is too apparent to be doubted. That it will occasion new political combinations, and probably make one of the elements of the next Presidential canvass, there is reason to believe." In fact, the Wilmot Proviso foretold a chilling future in which abolition was forced upon the South. Failure to address it was tantamount of abolitionism itself. "California *must* be ours," Claiborne implored his fellow Southernists, "*But upon the question of its acquisition, whether by force of arms or by treaty, the preliminary discussion on the extension of slavery, if indications are to be trusted, will come up. What then?*"\(^{142}\)

The question did indeed arise, with all the potential to split the Union that Claiborne and other Southernists feared. Yet it was the fear of losing slavery which commanded the most import. "The South cannot compromise," the *Jeffersonian* declared.


\(^{142}\) Ibid. "President Dew--Slavery and the South--John C. Calhoun," 17 Sept., 1846
"COMPROMISE WHAT?  We cannot concede the power of Congress...to exclude slavery from all our new territories, acquired by the common blood and treasure, without conceding a power...ultimately fatal to the South," the power to legislate on the subject of slavery.  Southernists were thus compelled to resist all supposed usurpations of Congressional power and extend the reach of slavery as far as possible, or risk destruction from vicious race war within.  The Courier followed suit, judging the Proviso and the safety of slavery to be the greatest threat to the South in its history, and the presidential election of 1848 to be the contest which would determine if the South lived or died.¹⁴³

Le Courrier De La Louisiane, New Orleans' premier French- and English-language newspaper, was so influential that it was designated by the state legislature the "Official Paper of the United States, State of Louisiana, First Municipality and of the Judicial Advertisements."  While it may sound like mere scrabbling for titles and hollow honors, such a position means, for historians, a rather high degree of both partisan and popular representation in the pages of the Courier.  Indeed, Jerome Bayon, the paper's editor for our period, was intimately involved in Democratic politics and local efforts to ensure that the election of 1848 did not result in catastrophe for the Democratic Party and for Louisiana.

The election of 1848 meant virtually everything to the emerging Southernist intellectuals, popular and otherwise.  To Bayon, the election was not about laissez-faire, not about protecting equal rights, or any other liberal goal, but rather the election was entirely about the security of slavery as embodied by equal and unadulterated access of slaveholders to populate the territories gained from Mexico (in that "just and righteous

¹⁴³  Ibid.
war") with their slave property secure. Throughout the election cycle, all editorializing on subject of free trade, or even political economy generally, virtually ceased. The subject which dominated political discourse was slavery and the need to protect it with all force necessary. The Wilmot Proviso had cut a political Rubicon across the Mason-Dixon line, and Bayon's Courier attempted to ensure that Louisiana's electoral votes would most assuredly go to the candidate which was absolutely opposed to the Proviso. Nothing less would suit, no matter what the candidates' positions on other issues.

No doubt influenced by the lucrative position afforded the Courier by Democrats in the legislature as the official state paper, Bayon maintained firm Democratic partisanship throughout 1848. The Democrats were a party of principle and principled men, whereas the Whigs were attempting to appease both proslavery and antislavery voters by selecting Taylor as their nominee. Taylor's record on the Proviso was anything but clear, and such a tactic well-suited the Whigs for a national contest. The Courier was, however, quite clear: "Who does not see that the Democratic Party is essentially the Conservative party of the Republic?"144 This partisan political battle began rather lightly, with each side trying to claim the true mantle of Jeffersonian liberalism, though neither appears to have positively adopted Jeffersonian philosophy.145 Those most closely approximating Jeffersonian liberalism, the Free Soilers (called "Barnburners" by their opponents), were largely ignored by Bayon. It is not that he failed to report their efforts, but rather that Bayon remained convinced, until election returns were actually received, that they were of

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144 Courier, "The Taylor Convention," 24 Feb., 1848; "The Taylor Letter," 2 March, 1848; "The Southern Platform," 11 March, 1848; "The Proviso," 13 March, 1848; "The Whig Meeting." 15 March, 1848. See also: Courier, 27, 28 Feb., 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23 March, 8 April, 12, 17, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31 May, 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26, 29, 30 June, 3, 5, 6, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29 July, 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, 31 Aug., 1, 6, 9, 11, 19, 26, Sept., 9, 10, 11, 17, 19, 24 Oct., 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, Nov., 1848.
little to no consequence. The nomination of Cass would surely put an end to the question of the Democratic Party’s position on slavery, and "Thus expires the last hope of Koondom, which rested solely on this feud in the bosom of the Democracy...O Koondom! O Koondom! Your end it will soon come!"

All opponents of Cass and the Democrats were thus taken to be friends of abolitionists, and therefore the worst of all villains:

The abolitionists have a variety of ways and means for circulating their doctrines, even down here in this remote part of the Union. They have book hawkers at work, who go from door to door offering literary works for sale with titles from which no one would suspect that the works themselves are tinctured with negro principles...with the grossest falsehood and misrepresentations respecting negro slavery in the South...This work, so far from deserving the patronage of Southern people, ought to be kicked into mud-holes, or sent to kindle fires under the sugar kettles...hunc tu caveto--hic niger est. (This fellow is a dark heart; be careful of him).

In fact, Bayon asserted, Millard Fillmore himself was an abolitionist--open and avowed! He was called "a rank abolitionist...who supported Adams (John Quincy Adams) in all his incendiary propositions." The Courier noted that should Fillmore win election and the Senate remain divided on the issue of slavery, his vote would be the deciding factor in the passage of any abolitionist bills into law. Since Taylor was vowing, following traditional Whig principles, to forego the use of veto powers, the entire abolitionist agenda could rather easily be crammed down the throats of groaning southerners. Drawing on recent historical experience, Bayon also feared what would happen if, as was the case with General Harrison, General Taylor died prematurely and the country was quickly left with an abolitionist president! Koondom come, indeed.

147 Ibid. "LOOK OUT, CITIZENS OF THE SOUTH!" 19 May, 1848.
The Proviso was taken to be a matter, quite literally, of life and death for the South, more dangerous than the Texas issue had ever been. Concerns over the tariff vanished into the air: "Let Southern men, who are appealed to by every consideration of justice, and of self preservation and who look upon the Wilmot Proviso as a paramount question of right and of safety, choose between the two candidates after reflecting upon this difference between them."\(^{150}\)

Conspiracy, pure and simple, was the key to unleashing Koondom on the South. The plot, running Taylor as an abolitionist in the North and proslavery in the South, was in full effect and must be stopped. The gentle game of rhetorical limbo joined by the Whigs was taken up by Southernists with zeal. Attacks on Fillmore were greatest in number and intensity, with Fillmore's preference for protective tariffs buried under a veritable mountain of proslavery rhetoric and charges of abolitionism.\(^{151}\)

Once again, abolition was said to be harmful to both master and slave. Responding to an attempt by Washington, DC abolitionists to escape with 3,000 slaves to the safety of northern waters by boat, the *Courier* described the paternalistic urge supposedly driving the proslavery cause:

Had the plot succeeded, and had the schooner got safe into Philadelphia or any other northern port, the fate of the negroes on board would have been more deserving of pity than their masters--for it is well known that the slaves in Maryland and Virginia are treated with extreme kindness, fed, clothed, and lodged, as comfortably in some instances as their owners--their servitude is in a manner nominal--they have access to the comforts, and what in some countries are looked upon as the luxuries of life...There is no more wretched and degraded class of men on the face of the earth, than the free blacks in the northern States--as a caste they are far below the slaves of the south.\(^{152}\)

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\(^{151}\) *Courier,* "Fillmoreism," 22 July, 1848; "Keep It Before the People," 10 Aug., 1848. See also: 5 Jan, 24 Feb., 1, 11 March, 26 April, 15, 26, 29, 30 June, 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 29 July, 3, 8, 9, 14, 18, 22, 31 Aug., 1, 9, 11, 18, 19, Sept., 10, 17, 19 Oct., 10, 11, 15, 16, 22 Nov., 1848.

\(^{152}\) Ibid. "Practical Abolition," 26 April, 1848.
Such sentiments contrasted greatly with presentations such as those noted above and simple comparisons of blacks to commodities. "Congress," Bayon declared, "has no more right to prohibit the sale of slaves from citizens of one State to citizens of another than to abolish the transportation of flour, tobacco, cotton or sugar from New Orleans to New York."\(^{153}\) The *Courier* challenged Taylor himself with what it thought was the ultimate question of the election: "We ask General Taylor if he can vote for Fillmore?...We ask every planter in Louisiana--every white man who enjoys the privilege of retiring to his own home at night, if he can give his suffrage to make a man Vice President of his country, who justifies servile insurrection, and murder of white men by negroes?"\(^{154}\) "The question is," Bayon posited, "CASS and BUTLER, with peace, happiness, perpetuity to the Union and the constitution; or Taylor and Fillmore, with endless dissentions, overthrow of the constitution, separation of the Union." The final appeal to the commercially-oriented electorate of New Orleans was put plainly: "It is the opinion of well informed men, that should Taylor and Fillmore be elected, there will be a speedy fall in the prices of negroes and southern property in general to the amount of 26 per cent."\(^{155}\)

Upon the Whig victory, the *Courier* was crestfallen and acidic. The Whig presses assured the vanquished that slavery was better protected with Taylor at the helm than ever before. Historians must wonder, then, what such a state of affairs indicates about the state of late antebellum intellectual history in the South when both sides in such a titanic political contest so closely approximated one another. When the battle was fought over who could best guarantee the status of slavery, rather than which side would promote the

\(^{154}\) Ibid. "Fillmoreism," 4 Sept., 1848.
ideals of Jeffersonian liberalism, can we properly say that liberalism was still alive in the South? Van Buren and his Free Soilers, ever treated by the Courier as a mere sideshow, were poised to fundamentally change American politics by rending the two major parties asunder. This was accomplished by forcing the slave question into national affairs. Van Buren, "the chief of the Barnburners," had the potential to explode the Democratic party, but the Courier claimed it would not happen--northern Democrats would not allow it:

The fundamental article of the Democratic creed is that no doctrine can be sound that is incompatible with the federal constitution, strictly and literally construed. The Wilmot proviso will not bear this test. The true democrat, the advocate of constitutional supremacy, the friend of his country, will tell those sticklers for the Wilmot proviso, those quasi-abolitionists--"Go your ways, we can no longer keep your company...The free soil movement is nothing more nor less than...abolition...No one can promote the one without advancing the other. The whole abolition force of the eastern states is merged in the Van Buren party, and Van Buren is an abolitionist, a Barnburner, an [agrarian], a communist, a socialist, anything to any man who will help him to embarrass the Democratic party. Anything, that is, but a Southernist.

Thus, a new intellectual paradigm of southern interests was born out of Jeffersonian liberalism, coming ultimately to reject outright some of the most fundamental tenets of the original system--natural law, natural rights, and laissez-faire. The intellectuals represented in this study were certainly not on their own in this respect, but rather were illustrative of an entire generation of late antebellum southern intellectuals. J. Mills Thornton has shown that 1850s Alabama was extremely illiberal in state affairs, spending massive amounts of money on internal improvements, advocating policies of cheap credit, state banking, and stronger support for slavery as, it was argued, slavery prevented damaging political upheaval by keeping laborers firmly in chains and unifying the interests of rich and poor whites. In Alabama, secessionism was seen as "a decided victory for

156 Ibid. "The Nomination," 31 May, 1848;
progressive democracy over conservatism--of Calhounism over Bentonism [hard money Free Soil policies] and Van Burenism."  

James Henry Hammond famously came to seek slavery and Union in the late 1850s, advocating an aristocratic social control over the "mudsill" classes so complete that it renders some of the most reactionary claims of Turnbull, the *Southern Patriot*, and the New Orleans *Picayune* mild by comparison.  More extraordinarily reactionary still was George Fitzhugh, who advocated white slavery to preempt the inevitable class wars which would be created by *laissez-faire* capitalism. Fitzhugh saw the interests of capitalists and wage laborers as fundamentally opposed and thus inevitably advancing toward class warfare and the subjugation of the wage earning masses whereas the interests of slaves and masters were supposedly perfectly consonant with one another.  Therefore, society would be tremendously benefited by the enslavement of poor whites as white slavery would serve to unify the interests of capitalists and workers.  Fitzhugh was so extremely *anti*-Jeffersonian, that eminent historian C. Vann Woodward makes the following critical statement:

> The distance between Fitzhugh and Jefferson renders the conventional polarities between Jefferson and Hamilton, Jackson and Clay, or Hoover and Roosevelt—all liberals under the skin—insignificant indeed.  When compared with Fitzhugh, even John Taylor of Caroline, John Randolph of Roanoke, and John C. Calhoun blend inconspicuously into the great American consensus, since they were all apostles in some degree of John Locke...For Fitzhugh frankly preferred Sir Robert Filmer [the English philosopher of absolute monarchy] and most of his works to John Locke and all his.  He saw retrogression in what others hailed as progress, embraced moral pessimism in place of optimism, trusted intuition in preference to reason, always preferred inequality to equality, aristocracy to democracy, and almost anything—including slavery and socialism—to laissez faire capitalism.

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158  See especially George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or, The Failure of Free Society*, (Richmond, VA: A. Morris, 1854) and George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!, or Slaves Without Masters*, (Richmond, VA: A. Morris, 1857).

Indeed, proslavery as John Locke was, he was so because he considered slavery to be a continuous state of war and, therefore, masters could perpetuate slavery not because it was beneficial to society—as the above southerners thought—but because it was preferable to alternative treatments for prisoners of war.\(^{160}\) The thought and rhetoric of thinkers like Hammond and Fitzhugh, rather than even challenging Locke, one of the most important liberal thinkers in history, neglect to even address his position on slavery. Liberals did not believe slavery could be legitimated, even in the Lockean fashion, but Southernists attempted it at every opportunity. As this essay has attempted to show, the history of more popular antebellum southern intellectual development continually, gradually, and steadily brought the southern mind closer to Fitzhugh and further from Jefferson as the Civil War drew nearer.

**Conclusions**

In John C. Calhoun's "Speech on the Slavery Question," of 4 March, 1850, he lamented the growing divisions between the northern and southern sections of the country, but contended that no one should be surprised at these developments:

> It is a great mistake to suppose that disunion can be effected by a single blow. The cords which bound these States together in one common Union are far too numerous and powerful for that. Disunion must be the work of time. It is only through a long process, and successively, that the cords can be snapped, until the whole fabric falls asunder. Already the agitation of the slavery question has snapped some of the most important, and has greatly weakened all the others.\(^{161}\)

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He proceeded to investigate the "cords of Union" which had been lately snapped: the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church, and the national political parties, which, under the influence of agitation of the slavery question, broke apart into sectional interest groups, vainly attempting to conciliate far disparate portions of the national electorate. Yet Calhoun could easily have listed another cord broken prior to the sectional crisis of 1850: the cord of Jeffersonian liberalism. The Enlightenment philosophy which had once united intellectuals from New England to Carolina had become confined to the grumblings of former Democrats in Van Buren's Free Soil Party, castigated and mocked by the trumpeters of an emerging southern paradigm of anti-Jeffersonian thought. With early transitionary figures like John Taylor of Caroline and Nathaniel Beverly Tucker to Robert Turnbull, the early Charleston _Mercury_, and Jacob Cardozo's _The Southern Patriot_, developing into the utilitarian, anti-Jeffersonian thought of the late _Mercury_, the New Orleans _Picayune_, James Henry Hammond, and George Fitzhugh, the cord of Union represented in Jeffersonian liberalism was steadily sawed apart and decidedly severed.

In no sense, then, can we consider these antebellum intellectual developments to fit the Hartz thesis. Hartz's argument that American intellectual history is best understood as the development of a single liberal tradition and its direct opponents seems to neglect the fact that these southerners, while beginning within the Jeffersonian tradition, came to explicitly reject it, doing so *not* through direct opposition to liberalism, but through seizing on the illiberal inconsistencies in Jeffersonianism, positively adopting them, and building upon them until their philosophy became not a liberal core with a mountain of inconsistencies around it, but a mountain of illiberal philosophy with a light liberal residue on the surface. Only the historical connection to Jefferson remained by December, 1860,
with the liberal substance of Jeffersonianism gutted, discarded, and replaced by thoroughgoing Southernism.

This vision of southern intellectual history also deeply challenges a large portion of historiography regarding Civil War causation which holds southern secession to have been rooted in Jeffersonian principles of political economy. This school, with its origins in Jefferson Davis' myth of "The Lost Cause," contends that secessionists were concerned with protecting not slavery, but the Jeffersonian conception of the Union as a compact between sovereign and independent states, *laissez-faire* political economy (including, first and foremost, antipathy to protective tariffs), and Lockean Natural Rights theory. As this study shows, however, many, if not most, southern intellectuals simply cannot be considered Jeffersonian by the time of the Civil War (indeed, by the beginning of the sectional crises of the late antebellum period), and one has merely to briefly peruse secession convention resolutions to confirm that the findings of this study only continue and intensify with time and apply to each Deep South state issuing secession resolutions in the Secession Winter of 1860-1861. We must, therefore, not only reject the overly simplistic Hartzian interpretation of American intellectual history, but we must continue investigating Southernism as a distinct intellectual tradition which played a major role in Civil War causation as opposed to Jeffersonian liberalism, which actually appears to have played little to no role whatsoever in either secession or the Civil War.

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