

Political Divisions, the Coming War, and Recreation of the Nation

Jim Pederson Dyed-in-the-Wool History January 20, 2025

The political shifts and divisions that occurred in the last couple of decades before the war of 1861 were closely aligned with cultural, religious, and philosophical divisions and were, in many respects, caused by them along with a host of economic factors. This was driven by immigration and the collapse of one of the major political parties, which led to the creation of another, and remade the major parties in a way that would remain relatively stable into the early 1900's. Along the way there were some major political missteps that led to one relatively small ethno religious group becoming dominant. While this outcome might be seen as likely in retrospect, it wasn't necessarily assured.

By the 1840's, the party's ethno-religious alignments were taking shape as the Catholic and high church Lutheran immigrants, referred to as liturgical, were not inclined to align themselves with a political party with a strong reformist and collectivist agenda built around northern Protestantism (1 p. 90). The Puritan-evangelicals were principally associated with the Whigs which were a true national party and not wholly aligned with a highly specific religious demographic. The Whigs were formed in response to Andrew Jackson's presidency in 1834 and had two wings. The northern wing was headed by Henry Clay and Daniel Webster and the Southern wing, which at one point supported Jackson, was led by John C. Calhoun. Jackson was a populace figure who was also of Borderlander descent and his election created opposition alliances that might have otherwise seemed unusual. It should be noted, however, that Jackson is not seen historically as a conservative or libertarian. The liturgical voters became the backbone of the Democratic Party in the North (2).

Under Jackson the Indian Removal Act was passed eventually leading to the relocation of the Southern Indian tribes to the Oklahoma and Arkansas territories. The Cherokee, who were largely westernized by this time and were by far the largest of the five tribes, resisted this in court led by Chief John Ross who sued the state of Georgia in 1831. The case eventually made its way to the Supreme Court where the Marshall Court ruled in favor of the Cherokees but Jackson wouldn't enforce the decision. The tribes were eventually relocated in 1838 under the Van Buren administration in what has come to be known as the Trail of Tears although there were actually several trails. There are differing interpretations of this event but there were many deaths along the way. The Seminole were the only tribe to actively resist under Chief Osceola which led to the Seminole Wars.

The population of the country increased very rapidly during this time period driven by the populating of the Midwest. The states that would eventually make up the confederacy became relatively smaller in relation to the whole at an alarming rate. The population of these states was made up of a combination of Yankee migrants and foreign immigrants. Building political alliances with groups in this area was central in determining whether the North or South would be dominant and although Western farmers would seem to represent a natural alliance for the South in many respects, the North managed to forge at least a temporary bond that was very important if not decisive in the coming war.

The eventual alignment of the Midwest with the Northeast is best explained by Phillip Leigh in his recent book, *Causes of the Civil War* and they are not cultural or philosophical but are simply economic. Railroads connecting the Midwest cities and towns with the east coast cities became economically more important than the waterway connections to the South. Secondly, some products from the Midwest, such as wool from Ohio, benefited from protective tariffs as America was not the low cost producer of wool. Lastly, the region benefitted greatly from improvement projects for roads, canals, and great lakes harbors that were paid for by federally collected tariffs. (3 pp. 28-9)

In the South, the agrarian slave-holding aristocracy was primarily aligned with the Southern wing of the Whig Party as the Northern business interests were typically aligned with the Northern Whigs. The Democratic Party was the home of the South's small farmers and non-slave holding whites. This caused a rapid and dangerous realignment when the Whigs collapsed in the mid 1850's (4 p. 104). On a national level, the Democratic Party was made of a diverse, "large tent" collection of people ranging from the lower end of the economic ladder to the middle rungs and, in terms of heritage, was comprised principally of borderlanders and new European immigrants. To the extent that they were religious, they largely saw religion as something that was not a collective venture to reshape society but was rather oriented to individual salvation and spirituality.

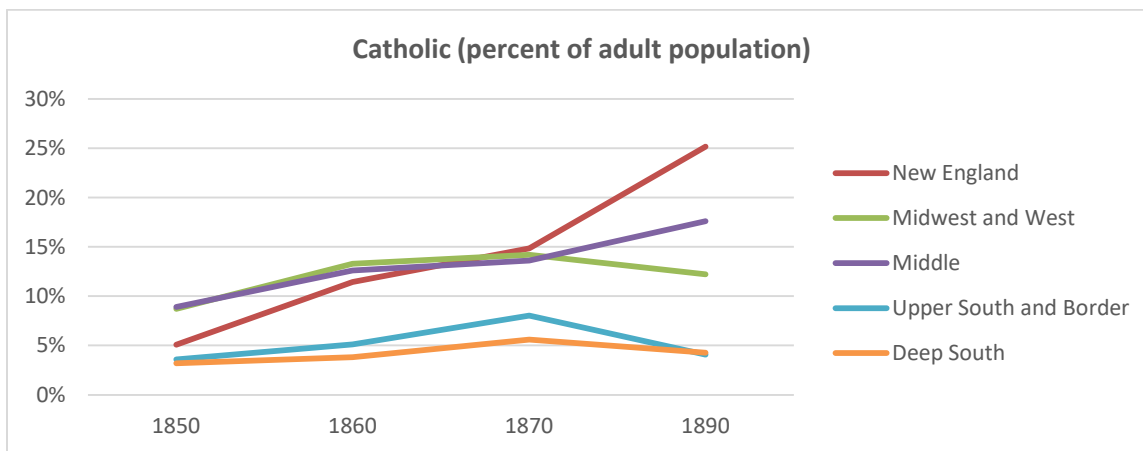
Starting in the 1850's following the failed socialist revolutions in Germanic regions and Eastern Europe of 1848, there was a political migration to America that was very significant but only for a few years prior to the American war. Many prominent people of this group joined the new Republican Party and were called in the time period "Red Republicans". Carl Schurz was a prominent liberal Republican at the time and his views specifically have been projected on to other Germanic immigrants. While Schurz was a vocal anti-cleric activist, immigrants from Germanic areas (German wasn't a country until the 1870's), Hungary, and Eastern Europe, before and after this time period, according to analysis of voting records by historian Paul Kleppner, appears to have been staunchly Catholic or Lutheran (5 pp. 123-24) and voted Democrat after the war. It's also probable that some of the new immigrants from these regions who settled in Yankee areas weren't familiar with US politics, and while not being ardent socialists, could have been temporarily drawn into the anti-slavery political narrative (4 p. 8).

The following table derived from US census and Religious Survey data highlights the impact of European Immigration, principally to the northern states, and the demographic problem this population surge posed to the Confederacy:

Population Growth and Immigration									
	1830	1840	% Inc	1850	% Inc	1860	% Inc	1870	% Inc
New England	1,954,718	2,234,822	14.33%	2,728,116	22.07%	3,135,283	14.92%	3,487,924	11.25%
Midwest and West	1,470,018	2,967,840	101.89%	4,836,251	62.96%	8,313,485	71.90%	11,773,812	41.62%
Middle	4,111,452	5,074,364	23.42%	6,573,301	29.54%	8,258,250	25.63%	9,716,715	17.66%
Total North	7,536,188	10,277,026	26.67%	14,137,668	37.57%	19,707,018	39.39%	24,978,451	26.75%
Upper South and Border	2,554,330	3,017,967	18.15%	3,786,514	25.47%	4,667,127	23.26%	5,968,004	27.87%
Deep South	2,563,000	3,509,078	36.91%	4,849,590	38.20%	6,397,213	31.91%	7,003,773	9.48%
Total South	5,117,330	6,527,045	21.60%	8,636,104	32.31%	11,064,340	28.12%	12,971,777	17.24%

North South Ratio	67.90%	63.51%	-6.92%	61.09%	-3.82%	56.14%	-8.09%	51.93%	-7.50%
US Total	12,653,518	16,804,071	32.80%	22,773,772	35.53%	30,771,358	35.12%	37,950,228	
Germanic Immigration		160,335		434,626		787,468		718,182	
Irish Immigration		207,381		780,719		914,119		435,778	
Total		367,716		1,215,345		1,701,587		1,153,960	
% of Pop Increase		8.86%		20.36%		21.28%		16.07%	
Est North Only		12.75%		29.91%		29.03%		20.80%	

The distribution of the Catholic population by region is shown in the following chart:



Texas won their independence from Mexico in the 1830's culminating in Santa Ana's defeat at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836 which lasted only 18 minutes. It was rumored that Santa Ana was in the middle of a sexual encounter at the time and this story led to the song "*Yellow Rose of Texas*" (the original story may or may not be true). Santa Ana, in addition to being an opportunist and an anti-cleric Freemason, was a centralizer in the mold of Lincoln and other prominent politicians of this period (6). In 1845 Texas joined the Union which brought about renewed problems with the New England states.

There were two notable small government presidents during the two decades prior to the war. John Tyler became president after the death of William Henry Harrison. The cabinet he inherited thought Tyler would do as instructed by them but he asserted control of the office. The entire cabinet resigned except for Daniel Webster. He opposed internal improvements, opposed the protective tariff, opposed the growing power of the executive branch, vetoed legislation he thought to be unconstitutional, and sought to break down the patronage and spoils system. He favored a neutral and non-aggressive foreign policy, retired public debt, and fought Henry Clay on the creation of a national bank (7 pp. 210-30). Franklin Pierce from New Hampshire, while not being a particularly effective politician, also resisted federal "*improvement projects*" vetoing two general improvement bills. He placed the blame for violence in Kansas firmly on the abolitionists.

From the 1840's on, the common historical presentation of US politics is dominated by slavery and it is presented under the assumption that it was principally a moral issue, which also aligns nicely with modern political narratives. The heavy presence of the abolitionists in the media of the day and the related feedback loop, that had the unintentional effect of legitimizing their arguments, caused regional cultural and economic differences to be cast in the context of slavery as a moral issue. Voters in the North generally had little interest in the issue apart from its potential impact on their own economic fortunes. During this time, the South was goaded into a couple of key mistakes.

In 1846, the Wilmot Proviso added a rider to an appropriations bill that prohibited slavery from spreading to any territories taken from Mexico in the Mexican-American war. Wilmot, an anti-slavery northern Democrat, referred to slavery as the "*peculiar institution*" that belonged in the South, which is where the common name originated from. Southern politicians, led by John C. Calhoun were incensed, reasoning that the South disproportionately provided the manpower to fight the Mexican War. This eventually worked its way to the Compromise of 1850. While making for good political theatre, it hurt the South politically and further divided the country over regions where slavery never could have or would have existed(4 pp. 64-68). They were drawn into a fight that had no practical benefit. Senator James E. Blaine of Maine accurately summarized the situation by saying, "*The whole controversy over the Territories, as remarked by a witty representative from the South, related to an imaginary negro in an impossible place.*"

The second major political mistake on the part of the South was the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Kansas was never going to be a slave state economically or demographically and it required people in Free states to be actively involved in the capture and return of fugitive slaves. Fugitive slaves never totaled more than 1,000 a year out of a population of 3.2 million in 1850 (4 p. 68). In exchange for this minimal economic benefit, the political damage was substantial. Abolitionist Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune stated that, "*the act created more abolitionists in two months than William Lloyd Garrison created in twenty years* (4 p. 81)." Committed abolitionists, based on abolitionist society rolls, were a small group and this act didn't dramatically move the needle on that point but it drew people and public sentiment to the abolitionist side that otherwise would have remained uninvolved. This turned out to be another example of a conflict that was better avoided.

As the Whig Party collapsed, the northern Whigs formed the Republican Party that was entirely regional and was dominated by northern protestant evangelicals which gave them an avenue to implement their social objectives at a National level. Yankee nativist groups also became Republicans. Former Whig politicians, such as Lincoln, became outwardly at least more progressive to earn the support of the progressive Evangelical core of the new Party although it is important to keep in mind that key Republican politicians like Lincoln still tended to be secular pragmatists. To quote Lincoln in 1832, "*My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance, I am in favor of a national bank,..in favor of the internal improvements system and a high protective tariff*" (8 p. 95). He consistently maintained this message throughout his career. The fire-eaters, who favored separation and emphasized regional loyalty, were left without a party and moved into the leadership of the Southern Democrats creating a one party system in the South. The Yeoman farmers looked to the fire-eaters as protection against a

growing and regionally biased central government. The establishment Southern Democratic politicians had to fall in line for their own political survival.

These rapidly unfolding political and economic events coupled with the underlying conflict of culture and world view led to the disaster that was to follow.

Church Divisions

Denominational divisions that occurred prior to the war of 1861 are commonly attributed simply to slavery which also assumes that slavery was universally seen as a religious issue or that the church's purpose is to shape society through political action. The denominational differences were far deeper than a single issue or collection of issues and reflect fundamentally incompatible world views and cultures. Evangelicalism in the northeast welcomed and incorporated non-standard religious movements and thoughts like Unitarians, Transcendentalists, Quakers, Universalists, Shakers, and other Christian-Socialist movements addressed earlier. According to Harriett Beecher Stowe, for example, "*all the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarian; all the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarian; all the elite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches; the judges on the bench were Unitarian*"(9 p. 382)(10 p. 4).

These theological trends weren't limited to the Congregationalists and the groups that sprang from Congregationalism, but spread to the other, more Evangelical, groups with the universities /seminaries acting to rapidly spread the new Gospel. Unitarian minister Stevens Buckminster was one of the first and most influential academics to introduce German higher criticism to American universities in the first decade of the 19th century(10 p. 5) after visiting Europe and these teachings spread rapidly much as the Frankfurt School Postmodernism has in recent times. Denominational differences in the north frequently meant relatively little with both clergy and followers moving readily between groups. Historian Gregg Singer labeled this departure from Biblical based theology as "*New England Theology*" which he went on to describe as, "*a mediating position holding to much of the Evangelical position while yielding at other points, particularly in regard to the doctrines of the atonement, divine sovereignty, and justification, in the direction of the Transcendentalist thought.*"(11 p. 65)

These sorts of "*innovations*" didn't take root in the South. An example of this was English born Unitarian Thomas Cooper who became President of South Carolina College in 1821. Instructor James Henley Thornwell vigorously opposed Cooper's adoption of higher criticism and the belief that man was not uniquely different from other animals. This was typical of the Southern reaction to these teachings and Thornwell eventually succeeded Cooper as head of the institution in 1851(10 pp. 5-6). As described by historian Eugene D. Genovese, "*The political ramifications of southern Christian theology were enormous. For at the very moment that the northern churches were embracing theological liberalism and abandoning the Word for a Spirit increasingly reduced to personal subjectivity, the southern churches were holding the line for Christian orthodoxy*(12 p. 92)". Representative of Southern resistance to New England Theology, the *Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, a Southern publication, encouraged parents to "*1)Express their own view on religion to their children; 2)Distribute Christian apologetic*

material in public; 3)Promote “intelligent men to promote their cause”; 4)Support institutions that subscribed to orthodox Christianity; & 5)Pray for the integrity of the colleges” (10 p. 6)

The issues with the underlying theology behind abolitionism and social activism were consistently observed and challenged by Southern clergy:

Our enemies have a zeal of God, but it is not according to knowledge. Their faith is, therefore, fanaticism. They substitute opinion for truth, dogmatism for doctrine, philosophy (falsely so-called) for religion. Thomas Smythe (11 p. 85)

The abolitionist spirit is undeniably atheistic. The demon spirit which erected its throne upon the guillotine in the days of Robespierre and Marat, which abolished the Sabbath, and worshipped rason in the person of a harlot, yet survives to work other horrors of which those of the French Revolution are but a type. Among a people so generally religious as the Americans a disguise must be worn, but it is the same old threadbare disguise of the advocacy of human rights. B.M. Palmer Thanksgiving Day sermon 1860 (11 p. 85)

Of the denominational splits the one that was most documented over a period of several decades was the split between the Old School and New School Presbyterians with the Old School Presbyterians being largely in the South. Since 1801 the Northern Presbyterians were joined with the Congregationalists in doing missionary work in the Ohio Valley. Initially there had been ambivalence on the part of conservative Presbyterians however, as New England Theology grew stronger and deeper in the Congregationalists and began to infect the other denominations in the North, the conflict of this alliance became more obvious. When the New School faction challenged the doctrine of original sin and traditional ecclesiology, the conservative wing eventually opted for detachment in 1837 (10 p. 8)(13 pp. 77-78). In 1857 and 1861 both the Old School and New School Presbyterians split into Northern and Southern factions(10 p. 71). This had to do principally with slavery in the sense of whether it was biblical or not, and, related to that point, whether it was a Biblical or political issues. The arguments largely came down to a question of scriptural authority or “*sola scriptura*”. Arguments for the church to stand against slavery ultimately required a final authority beyond the scripture(10 pp. 11-12). The abolitionist arguments appealed to a higher law founded not in either the bible or the constitution. Quoting historian Mark Noll, “*The primary reason that the biblical defense of slavery remained so strong was that many biblical attacks on slavery were so weak.*(10 pp. 52-53)” Southern Presbyterian minister Thomas Smyth defending the concept of spheres of authority stated, “*To convert the pulpit into an instrument of political agitation is most certainly to invade its sacredness; and they who do so, seldom fail to reap in disappointment the fruits of their indiscretion.*(10 pp. 55-56)” *This position was previously reflected by the Presbyterian synods of South Carolina and Georgia in December 1834 meeting, stating “slavery is a political institution, with which the Church has nothing to do, except to inculcate the duties of master and slave, and to use lawful and spiritual means to have all, both bond and free, to become one in Christ by faith.*(10 pp. 55-56)”

The Methodist position on slavery was that it was a “*great evil*” according to the *Book of Discipline* originally published in 1784. In 1816 the general conference issued a ruling that Methodists residing in

areas that allowed slavery and where manumission was difficult for legal or economic reasons regarding the freed slave were exempt from the edict. Some slave owners like William Capers and Evan W. Winans worked within that system but when Capers was nominated to the position of Bishop, the Northern faction opposed his nomination because he was a slave owner. Capers at that point still opposed separation foreseeing its implication regarding a potential future war writing in the *Southern Christian Advocate*, “*In the present state of the country, we believe it to be of the utmost importance to the country itself that the churches be kept together. Let the bonds once be severed which hold the churches of the North and South together and the Union of these states will be more than endangered, it will presently be rent asunder*” (10 pp. 71-71). The Wesleyan church broke away in 1843 condemning slavery as being inherently sinful and would become the main force behind abolitionism in the South from 1847 on. In 1844 Southern Bishop James Osgood Andrew received slaves through marriage, which he didn't free, and Northern Methodists called for his suspension. William Casper, whose position on slavery had by that time changed to support the institution as being scripturally authorized, along with other southerners seceded to form their own denomination(10 pp. 72-73).

The Baptist story is similar with the north's dismissal of slaveholding members driving the split. Through the 1700's the Baptists generally saw slavery as a political issue but this gradually changed as Baptists in the north came under the increasing influence of New England theology. By 1835 the abolitionists within the denomination and society had reached the point where the Alabama convention of that year wrote, “. . . certain individuals, mostly residing in the Northern part of the United States, calling themselves abolitionists, but who are properly called . . . fanatics, have formed themselves into societies, for the purpose of interfering with the relation of master and slaves. Their activities were “inconsistent with the gospel of Christ.” Abolitionists will “oppress the slave, . . . arm the assassin to shed the blood of the good people of our State; and . . . alienate the people in one State from those in another, thereby endangering the peace and permanency of our happy Republic” (13 p. p. 65). In 1843 anti-slavery Baptists demanded the Baptist Triennial Convention Board investigate missionaries James Huckins and William Tyron who were found out to be slave owners and James Reeve was denied entry to the national board. This led to Virginians and Georgians withdrawing from the National Baptist church to form the Southern Baptists(10 pp. 75-76).

What would probably seem surprising to most modern critics is that the Southern denominations, while not treating slavery as a political issue, opposed the “*race science*” theory popular in the North including among many abolitionists. Southern Theologian James Henley Thornwell, who was also a strong opponent of Biblical higher criticism, was representative of prevailing beliefs on this matter when he wrote, “*The Negro is of one blood with ourselves – that he has sinned as we have, and that he has an equal interest with us in the great redemption. Science, falsely so called, may attempt to exclude him from the brotherhood of humanity . . . but the instinctive impulses of our nature combined with the plainest declarations of the word of God, lead us to recognize in his form and lineaments – his moral, religious and intellectual nature – the same humanity in which we glory as the image of God. We are not ashamed to call him our brother.* (10 pp. 32-33)”

The Old Religiousness of the South

By 1800 the predominant mode of Worship in the South was Evangelical and through the Awakenings, the Methodists followed by the Baptists became statistically dominant, yet it should not be assumed that the Evangelical faiths were at all the same as in the Northeast. Evangelicalism took decisively different forms in different regions of the country. Quoting Murray Rothbard, *“The new pietism took different forms in various regions of the country. In the South, it became personalist, or salvational; the emphasis was on each person achieving this rebirth of salvation on his own, rather than via social or political action. In the North, especially in Yankee areas, the form of the new Protestantism was very different.”* (5 p. 328)

While Baptists and Methodists were the largest groups, there was a good deal of religious diversity in the South. There were Catholic populations in Maryland and Louisiana along the gulf coast. Episcopalians were a significant presence on the eastern seaboard along with a mix of Lutherans, Baptists, Catholics, and Jews. In North Carolina, there were Quaker and Moravian settlements. The Methodists and Baptists were dominant in the interior areas and spread west as the region was populated in the early 1800's; this was the heart of Southern religion(14). Puritanism and its related concepts of election and the *“city on a hill”* didn't have an audience in the South until the 1890's and the spread of fundamentalism from the north. Many churches in the South were integrated but generally had separate seating. This was especially true of the Methodists and the Baptists.

There were some conflicts between the different faiths but nothing on the level that occurred in the North. The greatest conflict was, as to be expected, between Catholic and Protestant, which led to some instances of legal restrictions being placed on Catholics, and there were sharp theological debates between clergy in the newspapers. Generally, however, Catholics found an accepting home amongst the predominantly Protestant population as did a significant Jewish population(14). Catholic Bishop John England of Charleston was well regarded amongst the city's Protestants. Catholic educational and healthcare facilities were highly thought of in the South and served the entire populace. During a yellow fever epidemic in Augusta, Georgia the mayor of the city praised the efforts of the nuns and priests caring for the stricken and aimed sharp criticism at certain Protestant clergy who were absent during the epidemic(14).

Southern writer Richard Weaver explained the religious pluralism of the South by what he referred to as the *“the older religiousness of the South”* further observing, *“For although the South was heavily Protestant, its attitude toward religion was essentially the attitude of orthodoxy.”* John Devanny , in his essay *“Where the Grapes of Wrath are stored”* goes on to describe the South during this period, *“Plural in denominations, evangelical in its dominant mode, but orthodox in belief may have created the conditions friendly toward religious tolerance. This was but one aspect of what Weaver viewed as the South's “medieval heritages.””*(14)

Southern religion had a relatively high view of God's sovereignty and a good deal of skepticism regarding the will of collective man. Southern religion was bounded largely in the traditions of Christendom that was based on Natural Law and Divine Positive Law (15), which is derived from divine revelation. Boyd

Cathey, in his essay, *The Revolt against Christian Civilization: The Southern View*, explains the interaction of Natural Law and Divine Positive Law as follows:

“That Divine Positive law in no way contradicted the natural law; indeed, it served to both confirm and refine it in its many applications, such that much of subsequent Christian theology is based on an understanding of both and their agreement: a sinful act in respect to Divine Positive Law is also a violation of the laws of nature. Thus, the act of willful murder violates Divine Positive Law (“thou shalt not kill”), but also the natural law which posits a natural “right to life.” One may die in battle or be sentenced to death for a committed crime, but seen from the perspective of God’s creation and from the natural existence of creatures, murder, while it happens, is never viewed as “normal.” A human being will, given his nature, grow to be an adult; and God’s wish is for His creatures to do likewise, and with His grace. (15)”

Southern Religion encompassed the history, traditions, and knowledge that framed Western Civilization, which Cathey summarizes by saying, *“In a real sense it is that “great chain of being,” that accumulated past and all it includes that makes us who we are, shapes us and gives us meaning.”* Contrasted to this was the evolving strain of northern Evangelicalism grounded in the Enlightenment that generally rejected this heritage. In so doing, they effectively erased and demeaned history which is a repeated characteristic of statism in all its forms, and replaced it with a new false reality they created.

To the Yankee, the notion that society, and specifically government, was not a tool to execute the will of God, and that society did not have both the right and obligation to impose its will on free individuals would seem inconceivable. Lack of faith in the inevitable and unstoppable progress of man, could be seen as nothing short of ignorant and backwards. And so it remains today although the modern Puritan is perhaps honest enough to have openly replaced God with Man. According to the Southern Religious traditions, these concepts of a New Paradise on Earth or a *“New World Order”* amount to a *“demonic lunacy, a madness of those who have lost their way, deny and, in effect, denounce their Creator, and therefore demean and dehumanize mankind who become nothing more than brute animals—without a past, without an annealing culture and inheritance, and without God. (15)”*

Civil Religion

Along with the development of economic nationalism and the evolution of political Christianity, there developed a new *“civil religion”*. This sort of thinking was always inherent in the Puritan worldview but the context of the *“City on a Hill”* was now expanded to represent an American nation, and perhaps a global endeavor, gradually leading to the *“deification of the national enterprise”* (1 p. p. 48). As Murray Rothbard observed, *“In the North, especially in Yankee areas, the form of the new Protestantism was very different. It was aggressively evangelical and postmillennialist, that is, it became each believer’s sacred duty to devote his energies to trying to establish a Kingdom of God on Earth, to establishing the perfect society in America and eventually the world, to stamp out sin and “make America holy,” as essential preparation for the eventual Second Advent of Jesus Christ. (5 p. 328)”*

The national and even global political objective wrapped in religion goes back to the Puritan and Separatist tradition in England and also with some Scottish Presbyterians. These people saw themselves

as the heirs to Cromwell's Puritan Commonwealth in the 1650s (1 p. 66). The awakening intensified and amplified these dissenting traditions and rejection of the social values of Christendom including a new understanding of, not just the church, but of the state. Northern Protestants typically identified themselves with a worldwide focus on advancing the Protestant Victorian Empire. They identified very closely with their English heritage (referred to as anglophile) and saw themselves as part of a transatlantic effort where English-speaking people would lead the worldwide advance of Protestantism (1 p. 66). Neither this vision nor the deep anglophile identity extended much beyond New England, western New York, and regions of the upper Midwest. Through the war of 1861, two World Wars, nearly continuous small wars, and through to the present day the challenge facing those who hold these views is how to sell them to everybody else?

Northern Evangelicals along with Congregationalists, and significant numbers of Presbyterians and Episcopalians, were all culturally and theologically inclined to subscribe to civil religion. Although these groups were largely left behind by the Awakening movements at the outset and were late "*coming to the party*", their greatest influence was in how they influenced other groups, specifically the Baptists and Methodists in a top down manner starting with the clergy and prominent lay people in the North (10 p. 41). Their "*New England Theology*" gradually steered the more evangelical denominations in certain regions of the country. This led to some strange and rather surprising alliances such as Baptists working closely with and having common gatherings with Unitarians(16).

A reasonable question at this point would be how this specifically happened and why was it isolated to the North? The philosophically liberal and politically progressive groups were focused on influencing others in a top down manner using the press, the government, the schools, and the clergy. This was a movement of the elite designed to change society as opposed to saving souls. The Transcendentalists are central to this despite not being an organized denomination or group. Their lack of central organization actually may have helped them infect other groups. By virtue of having a very high view of man and a relatively low concept of God, where God was essentially defined in the image of man, all human objectives became achievable and, beyond the political movements, these ideas gradually eroded the remnants of Christian orthodoxy in the North from the inside out. Along with culture and belief in the South, the seminaries and clergy acted as a firewall.

In assessing the role of religion in government it must be remembered that the society of this day was not operating under the modern context of near total separation of church and state. Many of the most prominent political commentators or influencers of the times remained the clergy, especially of these primary denominations and especially in the North. Contrast this to Methodist and Baptist clergy in frontier areas and in the South away from coastal cities who were commonly bi-vocational and not seminary educated and it's clear that the full time, professional, college educated, and urban clergy, while not winning new converts, would control the narrative and record the history. The level of religious participation, while increasing, was well under 40% and, if Catholics aren't counted, protestant Christianity represented nothing over 30% of the population in all states and less than 25% in the North. It was not a majority protestant Evangelical country and, even amongst this population, those who would tend to subscribe to the idea of civil religion were only a fraction of that (1 p. 51). Yet the clergy

representing this vision was highly influential and deeply connected to both media and to the education system.

The Awakenings, while not initially having a specific political agenda intensified and amplified the dissenting traditions founded largely on enlightenment thinking. Under the traditions of Christendom, reverence was accorded to a monarch as a representative of the church or God and the authority of the monarch was limited by the traditions of the Church along with natural constraints. In the United States, we see this veneration shift towards a concept and then to the state itself. The state was defined by a set of ideas which, in turn, represented God. As George Marsden observed, *“The United States developed a set of rituals and symbols that bore a striking resemblance to traditional Christian rites and symbols but in which the nation itself was the object of worship.* (1 p. 49)”

The gradual dominance of political and earthly values over the spiritual and eternal further led to a reassessment of history. The country was to devote itself to the *“cause of God”* as the *“cause of universal righteousness”* making this a sort of messianic nation (17 p. 12). These themes and goals developed over time becoming ever more sophisticated through World War I and has remained a common perspective since then adapting to fit new circumstances. It is also in stark contrast to the Augustinian view of history that had prevailed previously where collective man is unable to permanently direct our common destiny in this life. In the Yankee areas where the Awakening developed and spread this sort of thought, it became each believer’s duty to strive to establish a Kingdom of God on Earth striving to make America holy and stamp out sin in the redeemer nation as the first step in ridding the world of sin (5 p. 328). God wasn’t simply the redeemer of the individual sinner but was active in history and His purposes can be read in the pattern of secular history. This can be seen and interpreted by observation in the rise and fall of nations with prosperity and power being a validation of God’s favor. This, in turn, led to an expanding view of Christian missions which can be interpreted as either spreading the kingdom of God or expanding the Protestant Victorian Empire, assuming they are not one in the same (1 pp. 66-67). The believer’s duty went beyond simply supporting missionary activity, but as a critical part of the new doctrine, held that trying to maximize the salvation of others was inherently linked to one’s own salvation(18 p. 328).

It wasn’t long before the progressive clergy recognized that no level of agitation could bring this about as a voluntary project. The percent of the population in the Union states that were associated with Evangelical Protestantism was never more than about 22% and only some percentage of that would be considered committed to Progressive Christianity and the national political religion. While many of the founders saw freedom as a path to expanding righteousness through responsibility, the new civil religion would increasingly use the coercive powers of the state to bring about their objectives. This was fundamentally not an adjustment but the beginning of a change of course.

The Puritan Warrior – John Brown

The Harper’s Fiery Incident and the subsequent trial may have created the final breach that avoiding war, if not impossible, very difficult. The archetype of the Puritan warrior, Brown descended from Puritans who arrived not long after the Mayflower. His father moved to Hudson Ohio just south of

Cleveland in 1805. He was a strict Calvinist unaffected by the awakening movements. He had a tannery business that didn't do well and failed at a number of other business ventures due in large part to his poor interpersonal skills and inability to plan and manage details. He was drawn to large schemes and prone to financial overreach taking out 3 mortgages on the same property without notifying any of the lenders of the other loans. For Brown, the abolition movement gave purpose to an otherwise failed life.

One of the difficulties for the abolition movement is that they were trying to influence the actions of slave owners who lived several hundred miles away. There wasn't a point where the two sides came together until Kansas. The "*Emigrant Aid Company*" organized groups of anti-slavery settlers, armed them with breech loading Sharp rifles, and sent them to Kansas. By May of 1855 Brown and his sons were in Kansas near the abolitionist town of Osawatimie. Their tendency towards violence led the Browns to reject attempts at compromise by free soil moderates (by far a majority) to reach compromise solutions. By "*free soil*" that meant they not only didn't want slaves in Kansas but didn't want free Blacks either. When Brown freed two slaves he was dismissed as the captain of his rifle company. He was disgusted at the anti-Black views of the moderates and said he was ready to see the country "*drenched in blood*".

After back and forth violence a group of Southerners trashed Lawrence, which was the largest anti-slavery town in Kansas, but Brown's rifle company didn't get there in time to engage them. To avenge the act, the next night Brown, his four sons, and other followers executed five unarmed men in the middle of the night along Pottawatomie Creek which was known to be a pro-slavery area. They were executed with swords in front of their families and Brown forced his sons to commit the acts. The victims were not slave owners. (19 pp. 129-36)

Following the murders, Brown and his sons were fugitives but still managed to move back and forth to Canada through abolitionist towns but he was not welcome in Kansas. He freed several slaves in Missouri and killed the slave owner before leaving the area. Kansas had been pacified by a new territorial governor who disbanded the militias and was not nearly as dangerous or volatile as it is typically seen as being. Brown went on a fundraising trip through New England that ultimately wasn't successful but he made a strong impression on a couple of Concord's philosophers, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who came to see him as a figurative reincarnation of Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan military leader that depopulated Ireland slaughtering whole towns. Like Cromwell, Brown claimed that his murders had God's approval. By 1857 his attempts to raise and finance his own army had failed and he needed to move onto another grander plan(19 pp. 220-27). With the help of a group of Boston backers (Secret Six) he began making plans to attack Harpers Ferry Armory. As was typical, he assumed he knew a great deal more about his external environment than he actually did, vastly overestimated his own significance, showed no real understanding of his adversaries or those he was attempting to help, and lacked detailed planning and contingencies. The afternoon of October 16, 1859 the plan was put in motion. Brown had attempted to get Fredrick Douglass to participate but realizing how badly planned it was, he opted to sit this one out. Brown was eventually captured and hung and two of his sons died slow agonizing deaths in his presence during the raid. He didn't initiate any sort of rebellion although he did cause some degree of local panic for a short while. His courtroom performance sealed his status as a martyr and messiah-like figure for radical abolitionists.

John Brown's trial was great political theatre for the abolitionists but he very nearly didn't make it to the trial showing how history can sometimes turn on a dime. When the marines stormed the armory, Brown ducked to avoid the initial blow from a saber that would have split his head and then the following thrust caught his belt buckle. Quoting from Robert Mitcham, *"Lieutenant Greene ordered his men to ram the doors with a heavy ladder nearby. The wooden doors splintered on the second ram. Greene rushed in, followed by his men. The two marines behind him were shot—one by Brown himself. Private Matthew Ruppert, who was shot in the face, survived, but Private Luke Quinn, shot by Brown in the abdomen, died. Colonel Washington, meanwhile, pointed Brown out to Greene. Ignoring the shower of bullets flying all around him, the marine lieutenant rushed the anti-slavery leader (who was kneeling to reload) and swung his saber hard, intent on splitting Brown's skull. "Osawatomie" dodged to the side at the last instant. The blow only left a deep gash in his neck. As Brown stood up, the lieutenant gave him an under-thrust with his sword midway up his body, lifting him completely off the ground. Fortunately for Brown, the thrust hit his belt buckle. Greene's sword then bent double, so he delivered several vicious blows to Brown's head with the hilt, using it as one might use brass knuckles (20 p. 97)."*

In the end, modern history has recorded John Brown as a saint largely immortalized by the New England literary elite of his day:

"The new saint, than whom none purer or more brave was ever led by love of men into conflict and death ... who would make the gallows as glorious as the cross" Ralph Waldo Emerson (19 p. 244)

Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. There are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not Old Brown any longer, he is an angel of light." Henry David Thoreau(21 p. 59)

"St. John the Just" Louisa May Alcott (Little women)(21 p. 59)(22 p. 235)

Another New England writer who consistently showed a deeper understanding of the Yankee Puritan character got it right:

"Nobody was ever more justly hanged" Nathaniel Hawthorne(21 p. 59)

The song *"John Brown's Body Lies A-Molding in the Grave"* was a catchy tune and was immortalized in the Battle Hymn of the Republic.(22 p. 235)

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