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Proslavery Thinking In Antebellum South Carolina: Higher Education, Transatlantic Encounters, And The Life Of The Mind

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PROSLAVERY THINKING IN ANTEBELLUM SOUTH CAROLINA:
HIGHER EDUCATION, TRANSATLANTIC ENCOUNTERS,
AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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DEDICATION

To my mother and lifelong friend, Diane Poole Wilson

“All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.”

- Abraham Lincoln

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I enjoyed the benefit of much assistance during this project. It is a pleasure to acknowledge all the kindness and generosity. I could not have completed this dissertation without them.

The Virginia Historical Society's award of a Mellon Fellowship enabled me to travel and peruse their William Campbell Preston holdings; their willing assistance with locating materials is appreciated. The Columbia Society of Colonial Dames awarded me their 2014 Walter Edgar Scholarship, which financed my travel costs to the Henry E. Huntington Library. Archivists Graham Duncan and Brian Cuthrell rendered frequent and excellent help at the South Caroliniana Library over my five-year research period, even discovering additional materials beyond those requested. I appreciate the services of those who helped me to obtain necessary document copies in the final stages, such as archivists within the Virginia Tech Library System, the University of Virginia, Duke University's Rubenstein Library, and the Filson Historical Society. Jaeda Snow not only assisted me in locating documents while I visited the Huntington Library, but also located and scanned documents that I found I needed after returning to South Carolina.

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My parents have provided me with tremendous support over the six-year journey. My father, James Kendall Wilson, has, in addition to assisting me financially, frequently encouraged me, expressing his pride and admiration for my dedication to this endeavor. My mother, Diane Poole Wilson, comforted me during the rough spots, patiently edited dissertation drafts, and rejoiced with my final success. We discussed Sesame Street and Richard Scarry books when I was a small child, and now we have discussed Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s proslavery thought and European experiences. To her, my lifelong friend, this work is dedicated.

ABSTRACT

Eminent antebellum intellectuals Thomas Cooper, James Henley Thornwell, William Campbell Preston, and Francis Lieber, not only shaped their sociocultural milieu as published authors, compelling speakers, and powerful politicians, but also created a greenhouse environment of proslavery instruction at South Carolina College (SCC), today the University of South Carolina. As professors and presidents of the state's landmark institution of learning, they produced some of the South's most radical proslavery thinkers during the forty crucial years preceding the Civil War. SCC alumni, fresh from the four professors' hothouse, became seminal figures in fomenting secession, fighting the Civil War, and firing Southerners' frenzy to turn back the clock during the Redeemer period.

This dissertation also examines the profound effect of European travel on Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's proslavery thought, resulting in their increased passion to defend slavery. Concepts they internalized across the Atlantic appear as crucial components of their justification of slavery. They decided that the situation of Southern slaves was far more tenable than that of the British and Continental working classes, and, therefore, concluded that European interference in Southern slavery on a humanitarian basis was blatantly hypocritical. Firsthand observations of Europe's miserable working classes, oppressive manufacturing conglomerates, and absolutist governments fueled their

fight to preserve the “republic” of South Carolina’s states’ rights and agricultural status quo.

Four case studies focus on the four professors’ proslavery argument. Cooper, as a lawyer-politician, Thornwell, the South’s most prominent theologian, and Preston, United States Senator, continuously warned their students and all Southerners to avoid Europe’s negative example and protect slavery and states’ rights. Although he did not publish proslavery thought and, at times, denied proslavery sympathy, examination reveals that Lieber evinced the same proslavery beliefs and behavior as his colleagues and passed them on to his students, the future governors, senators, soldiers, and generals of the state and Confederacy. This work discusses the development of the four professors’ proslavery and pro-Southern thought in Britain and the Continent, and how it, in turn, heavily influenced their SCC students, the South, and American history. Transatlantic experience was a significant current within the development of Southern culture.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HEH	Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
SCL	South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC
VHS.....	Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation features four prominent antebellum Southern thinkers, Thomas Cooper, James Henley Thornwell, William Campbell Preston, and Francis Lieber, who not only influenced proslavery argument and a variety of other southern thinking as published authors, compelling speakers, and powerful politicians, but also created an incubator of proslavery instruction at South Carolina College (SCC). As professors and presidents of the Columbia, South Carolina institution, these men, arguably, molded some of the most influential proslavery thinkers of their generation during the forty crucial years before the Civil War (see chapter six and appendix one.) In addition, this work traces the refining effect of European travel upon the reasoning of these ideologues that resulted in an increased commitment to slavery. These thoughts were at the fore when they decided that Southern slaves had a far more tenable situation than the free European working classes. Exploration of the transatlantic perspective reveals the impact of European experiences as the impetus of their proslavery thought, which they, in turn, actively fostered in the minds of future Southern leaders.

These elite protégés, the South's next generation of leaders, took to heart the precepts of their professors; many became proslavery champions and states' rights politicians. As sons of the slaveholding elite, the young men were already predisposed to accept slavery and states' rights doctrine based on the life experiences of their formative years. The training they received at SCC, however, not only infused them with zeal to protect their state and its slave society, but also equipped them with the formal training to

expound these ideas and persuade others as politicians and Southern social leaders. Determined to protect slavery and avoid Europe's free labor system, SCC alumni drove the state toward secession, into the Civil War, and sought to revive the past after the din of battle had faded.

This dissertation focuses on four professors from SCC (known today as the University of South Carolina) because of the profound influence Columbia and South Carolina had on the region as a whole and, thereby, American history. Lacy Ford, in *Deliver Us from Evil*, acknowledges South Carolina as “the voice of the Lower South” and shows in his work that, although the upper and lower South went in separate directions, the lower South eventually convinced the upper South to join with it to secede, create the Confederacy, and launch the Civil War. SCC produced intellectuals, such as James Henry Hammond and Josiah Nott, who wielded tremendous support for the institution of slavery in the South. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber are worthy of study due to their important role as philosophers, educators, authors, and leaders who influenced SCC students, the state of South Carolina, the South, and, ultimately, the nation, as a result of their direct influence upon the thoughts and deeds of the individuals who actively began and sustained the Civil War, a war which reshaped and continues to affect the United States.¹

In addition to Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's profound influence on SCC graduates, they also filled a larger role that extended to the region, and, in some cases, the nation. Their beliefs emanated beyond the classroom through their published works, including textbooks, works of philosophy, sermons, and speeches. Cooper and

¹ Lacy Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), introduction.

Preston were involved in proslavery politics; Cooper battled in the 1828-1832 nullification controversy, while Preston, as United States Senator, fought for the admission of slave states into the Union, such as Texas. Thornwell stood as a highly revered Presbyterian minister and leader within the South who published sermons “on the rights and the duties of masters.” Lieber, considered antislavery by some historians, in fact evinced behavior and sentiments quite similar to those of the other proslavery professors.²

All four men were important intellectuals in their own right. Cooper studied law at Oxford (1770s), served as a judge in Pennsylvania (1806-1811), received an honorary Doctor of Medicine from the University of New York (1818), and served as chemistry professor at Dickinson College and the University of Pennsylvania (1811-1819). Both he and Lieber were well known in the area of political economy, and their works on the subject were highly respected and widely read. Lieber’s renown, as well as his popular scholarly writings, spread across both the United States and Europe; he edited the *Encyclopedia Americana* (1832), wrote on political hermeneutics and civil liberty, and had influential friends like Alexis de Tocqueville and Joseph Story. Thornwell, a theologian, published frequently in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* in the 1840s and 1850s. He also served as editor of the *Southern Quarterly Review*, which discussed a number of intellectual and cultural subjects. Preston, a fourteen-year statesman who served first as a representative of Richland County at the South Carolina State House (1828-1834), and then as a United States Senator from South Carolina in Washington (1834-1842), delivered many carefully organized speeches, filled with supporting data, to

² Several historians, such as Lieber’s biographer Frank Friedel, Peter W. Becker, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Eugene Genovese believe that Lieber was antislavery (see chapter five.)

sway his listeners to his point of view. Antebellum society, South and North, considered Preston to be one of its finest orators.

Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's forms of proslavery argument differ. The first three wrote and published pamphlets and books which contained carefully written treatises in favor of slavery, constructed to appeal to the logic and emotions of their many readers. All three used the pitiable condition of the poor in Europe as an important component of their arguments in favor of slavery as a benevolent institution. They also discussed their encounters with British and Continental abolitionists, who they considered to be overzealous, illogical, and hypocritical, in order to discredit abolitionists' critiques of slavery. Cooper also discussed pseudoscientific notions of biological racial difference to buttress his arguments. Thornwell, a Presbyterian minister, emphasized the Christian's responsibility to care for his slaves. Preston used the example of Northern abolitionist encroachment on what he conceived to be the Southerners' right and necessity to maintain slavery. All three warned South Carolina to protect itself from the North and the federal government in order to preserve slavery. With the exception of a small section in a published speech, Lieber did not write formal proslavery argument, but his correspondence and actions confirm his status as a proslavery individual. His admiration for Southern intellectuals, such as Calhoun and Preston, as well as his own racism, places him in the same camp as the Southern intellectual elite. Most importantly, Lieber influenced SCC students in proslavery and southern rights' thinking. Their

European travel reminds us of the important if often overlooked point that proslavery thinking in the antebellum South was part of a transatlantic current.³

Southern Colleges, Southern Manhood

In *Slavery in White and Black*, Genovese and Fox-Genovese discuss the general antebellum trend of Southern colleges to inculcate students with proslavery and pro-Southern beliefs, such as states' rights and laissez-faire economics. They affirm the crucial place of college within the upper echelons of society: "A substantial portion of the southern elite attended college, at least for a year or two, receiving a moral and philosophical instruction approved of by political, religious, and social leaders." Alarmed by abolitionist trends in Europe and the North, "[e]ducators sought to counteract a growing transatlantic revulsion that classified slavery as a moral as well as social evil...Having demonstrated that the Bible sanctioned slavery and that all historical experience sustained it, educators positioned themselves to construct a worldview appropriate to slaveholding society." Foundational beliefs of proslavery philosophy took root between 1820 and 1840, when "campus opinion...shifted toward acceptance of slavery as divinely sanctioned and morally justified...College professors, whether unionist or secessionist, weighed in on the superior condition of southern black slaves relative to that of free white workers abroad." Despite a few exceptions, "generation after generation of college students moved from criticism of slavery to acceptance of a necessary evil, and on to the exaltation of slavery as a superior social system." Cooper,

³ Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's proslavery argument will be examined in their respective case studies. The proslavery paternalist section of Lieber's speech, *The Character of a Gentleman* (1846), is discussed in chapter five.

Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber persuaded their students that slavery was not only superior to free labor, but also essential to the South's well-being.⁴

Although Fox-Genovese and Genovese alone mention the connection of slavery as a "superior social system" as compared to "free white workers abroad," other historians of Southern colleges likewise acknowledge the role of Southern values and ideals within the region's institutions of higher learning. John R. Thelin's work, *A History of American Higher Education*, poses key Southern colleges that became institutions of excellent academic standing, educating the next generation's politicians. SCC and the University of Virginia, for example, developed a "tradition for education in public leadership." Both possessed a highly regional flavor, obtaining students from "wealthy plantation families" from their own state and the region. As a result of preserving and fostering elite Southern ideals, "by 1860 the University of Virginia had become successful at transmitting the distinctive code and culture of the nineteenth-century Virginia gentleman to its students, and to the South's future leadership." Virginia, as the upper South's leader, however, remained milder in its Southern doctrines than did SCC, the lower South's educational head, an institution which championed nullification and secession from 1827 onward.⁵

⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 90-91. See pages 89-95 for a discussion of slavery teachings in Southern colleges. In *The Mind of the Master Class* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6, Fox-Genovese and Genovese mention the crucial importance of educational works to Southern society. "The social and intellectual elite of the master class did shape the culture to a considerable degree [in] the extent to which they brought their vision and aspirations into harmony with those they sought to lead." Elite authors held a particularly strong position: "Hence, a good many of the books by clergymen as well as laymen... were, in fact, published versions of college lectures given over many years; they were part of the education of the thousands of young people... who shaped southern politics and ideology." In a short list of especially important Southern leaders, Genovese and Fox-Genovese mention "Thomas Cooper... on political economy" and "James Henley Thornwell on theology and social questions."

⁵ John R. Thelin, *A History of Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 46-52.

Honor, an important motivator in elite white Southern males' rush to protect their state and society, was an important component of college life at SCC and at other Southern universities. In *Halls of Honor*, Robert Pace states that "student culture was created through...the southern code of honor and natural adolescent development." He defines honor as "a set of rules that advanced the appearance of duty, pride, power, and self-esteem; and conformity to these rules was required" to be an elite member of society in good standing. Pace calculates that much of what students did in college had honor behind it as the guiding motive. Rather than arguing that Southern boys wished to protect their states' honor through political involvement, he states that Southern collegians showed only a minor interest in political events during the antebellum days, only changing their tone when the Civil War was imminent. This was not the case at SCC; from 1820 to 1860, political events, especially those with a sectional bearing, fascinated students. The Southern code of honor, however, was significant; SCC students particularly liked Preston's style of presidential leadership, for example, because he kept order while respecting their honor as Southern gentlemen (see chapter six.) Certainly, the four professors' instruction in paternalism prepared the young men to be "honorable" slaveholders.⁶

Lorri Glover "revisit[s] the honor thesis" in her work *Southern Sons*. Although she admits that honor was important, she believes that their achieving manhood involved "a complex mix of influences – national, Atlantic, and local – which included but transcended honor." Young college men at SCC certainly imbibed transatlantic influences from their professors, whose proslavery ideology had been shaped through

⁶ Robert Pace, *Halls of Honor: College Men in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 4-6, 9.

European travel, and they were certainly men of their locality. However, the local far transcended the national in the case of SCC students. Glover states that Southern boys had to prove their manhood; “A boy became a man only when he convinced his community that he was one,” Glover explains. “[T]heir transition to manhood played out against a backdrop of bondage; they became men in part by personifying the antithesis of their slaves and became southern by protecting that institution.” Success in the areas of slave mastery and politics were crucial to the elite white male’s manhood, and the SCC training the students received practically assured their success in these two areas.⁷

Southern college historians tend to agree on the presence and importance of slaves on the antebellum college campuses. Pace mentions personal daily services slaves performed for the young men, student abuse of slaves, and students’ witnessing professors’ interactions and conflicts with the enslaved. The website project, “Slavery at South Carolina College,” created by eight colleagues and me for a graduate seminar at the University of South Carolina in 2011, chronicles the slaves’ daily responsibilities, the buildings they constructed, their interactions with students, and their names and occupations when known. Craig Steven Wilder’s book *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* ventures beyond these claims to argue that slavery provided not only service and upkeep for colonial universities North and South, where “enslaved people often performed the most labor-intensive tasks,” but were also the economic base for their founding in the first place. This was definitely true of

⁷ Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 2-4, 63, 76-77, 106-107. Glover’s book primarily discusses 1790-1820, so the ultra Southern nationalism had not yet begun. In her brief discussion of SCC, she mentions a couple of instances when a few students rebelled and insulted Cooper early in his tenure at the college. These instances, however, are quite isolated; Cooper was overwhelmingly admired and respected by his students.

SCC in the antebellum period, as it was built and maintained by slaves and funded by the income and taxation of plantation owners.⁸

Wilder also contends that theories of race gave colleges and their faculty scientific currency in the antebellum world. Institutions such as Harvard “armed” students “with theories of racial difference and scientific theories about the superiority of white people.” Wilder conflates the North-South experience, stating that “The North-South divide, the sectional crisis, is not a particularly useful template for explaining the course of science or the behavior of college faculties and governors in the antebellum nation.” Although this sweeping conclusion is debatable, theories of biological racial difference appeared frequently in Southern proslavery argument, buttressing the enslavement of approximately four million people and serving as a guiding factor in the secession rationale. For example, Cooper discussed his conclusions on biological racial difference in his proslavery defenses (see chapter two).⁹

In contrast to Wilder, who declares that slavery and racial difference permeated colleges North and South, Timothy J. Williams argues that the University of North Carolina (UNC) had significant antislavery tendencies in his analysis of the antebellum institution’s educational climate. As opposed to arguing that “antebellum southern colleges [were] crucibles of an elite regional identity, where young men learned to be gentlemen and southerners above all else,” he believes that UNC students “favored bourgeois values and both national and regional belonging.” Williams contends that the

⁸ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 48-50; Allison Baker, Jennifer Betsworth, Rebecca Bush, Sarah Conlon, Evan Kutzler, Justin McIntyre, Elizabeth Oswald, Jamie Diane Wilson, and JoAnn Zeise, “Slavery at South Carolina College,” Website and unpublished manuscript, 2011, University of South Carolina. This website <http://library.sc.edu/digital/slaveryscc> and the resulting privately owned manuscript were created as the semester project of a graduate seminar in public history in spring 2011, led by Professor Robert Weyeneth. The website is located on the library website of USC-Columbia. Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 3, 134, 232.

⁹ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 48-50; Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy*, 3, 134, 232.

“transition from boyhood to manhood, not regional identity,” was students’ most pressing concern and that “this focus on self was consistent with middle-class or bourgeois culture developing in the United States.” In contrast, regionalism was a central concern at SCC, and the planters’ sons, members of an elite and rarified culture as opposed to UNC’s middle class predominance, strove to become political leaders who could defend their state’s primary concerns. Although slaves maintained the UNC campus, the curriculum did not include proslavery argument and many of the students espoused antislavery leanings. Williams pointedly states that “antebellum education did not create proto-Confederates.” Per Williams, proslavery opinions only increased in the 1850s, and were still not held by all. “Even as students felt the increasing pressure of sectionalism in the late antebellum period,” Williams explains, “there was no consensus that regional identity should ever trump American identity.” SCC was quite different in these regards; this dissertation argues that proslavery argument, intensified by transatlantic European experiences, permeated SCC.¹⁰

In Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, Jennifer Oast studies the enslaved persons who were not owned by an individual, but by an institution, a situation of “many masters.” She argues that these slaves could not take advantage of “white self-interest and paternalism” and that

¹⁰ Timothy J. Williams, *Intellectual Manhood: University, Self, and Society in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 1-3, 14-15, 70-72, 174, 193, 195, 197, 208. In debates, UNC students questioned the efficacy of slavery as a viable social and economic construct. Faculty, students, and outside speakers alike kept away from “partisan” discussions of slavery. The value of the Union as one and indivisible was carefully upheld. UNC’s moral philosophy course included Wayland’s *Elements of Moral Science*, which specifically labeled the institution of slavery as immoral. Although Williams believes that the concept of southern colleges as training grounds of proslavery and secessionist thought is too widely relied upon, he does admit that UNC’s “student culture may have been unique in its open questioning of slavery.” Although UNC students believed that blacks were racially inferior to whites, many leaned toward gradual abolition of slavery because they felt “it impeded state development and the progress of civilization.”

their bargaining power for better treatment was generally curtailed. Interestingly, Cooper had less patience with a college-owned slave than he did with his own; alternatively, Thornwell showed definite concern for SCC slaves' well-being (see chapter six.) At the College of William and Mary, for instance, Oast notes that college slaves provided young men with a convenient opportunity to "test...the limits of their manhood as well as their mastery of those beneath them in the social hierarchy. This situation led to student violence against slaves." Similar occurrences existed at the University of Virginia with "scions of the upper class" who strove for "careful preservation of their honor and exhibitions of the mastery of their inferiors." This situation was no stranger to SCC; Thornwell frequently attempted to restrain student abuse of college slaves (see chapter six.)¹¹

In addition to physically acting out the role of master, elite Southern college students were also acquiring the social understanding of and intellectual justification for their role. Oast remarks upon the fact that institutions, such as colleges, visually sanctioned slavery within their societies by having their own slaves. Such strong endorsement from pillars of society "must have given slavery an aura of community (even divine) approval." Thomas R. Dew, proslavery apologist, was a professor at the College of William and Mary during the antebellum era. "So the slaves who worked at the college during the antebellum period existed in an environment in which the faculty taught and students absorbed all the justification for slavery and racism that the minds of southern defenders of slavery could concoct." Although Southern elites almost always embraced slavery, the atmosphere in colleges that trained students in proslavery argument

¹¹ Jennifer Oast, *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680-1860* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 7-8, 127, 160.

was far more intense. “While...most masters subscribed to these proslavery beliefs in the antebellum era,” Oast explains, “College slaves were in the unusual situation of living and working where the doctrines of inferiority were vigorously taught and given academic credence.” Students, therefore, embraced the Southern socioeconomic rationale of slavery even more fully at college than they did, or could, at home.¹²

In addition to providing a place of proslavery instruction, SCC molded its students into skilled politicians who could protect Southern culture. In his article “The Power of Ancient Words: Classical Teaching and Social Change at South Carolina College,” Wayne K. Durrill states that SCC used “ancient texts” from the Greek and Latin classics in order “to produce a coherent ruling elite in a developing plantation society.” Understanding the classics not only placed SCC graduates in a class “apart...from slaves and yeoman farmers” and “qualified students for membership in a very select group,” but also gave them “skills and ideas vital to the exercise of political power.” In fact, Durrill states that a diploma from SCC guaranteed graduates’ entrance to the state’s small and exclusive “ruling elite.” He nods to the proslavery atmosphere by drawing parallels from classical Roman texts and South Carolinian political ideals. For instance, the city-state of Athens, benevolently ruled by “a small group of patricians prospering by slavery,” especially appealed to 1850s students.¹³

One monograph specifically discusses the SCC milieu and its effects on its students and alumni. Michael Sugrue, in his 1992 dissertation “South Carolina College: The Education of an Antebellum Elite,” argues that SCC was the “weathervane” for the

¹² Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 8, 142.

¹³ Wayne K. Durrill, “The Power of Ancient Words: Classical Teaching and Social Change at South Carolina College, 1804-1860,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Aug., 1999), 470-475, 478, 496.

state and that the college trained students in “[p]roslavery extremism, states rights dogmatism, and Southern nationalism.” These same students “later became key figures in Southern cultural life.” In South Carolina’s State House, “[a] network of men with college ties took up the [political] organizational vacuum” and acted almost as a political party. He adds that numerous SCC grads relocated to other Southern states, where they rose to political prominence, and that “alumni were prominent” in ten secession conventions, as well as in the “Confederate Congress and Army.”¹⁴

In addition to the agreements between this dissertation and Sugrue’s monograph, several differences nonetheless exist. Sugrue’s work demonstrates the college’s influence as a whole during its sixty years of antebellum operation, 1801-1861, whereas this study demonstrates the prominence of four specific professors between 1819 and 1860. A major focus here is the transatlantic influences upon the philosophies of Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, in which they later trained Southern minds. Sugrue acknowledges Cooper’s influence over the students in the area of states’ rights, stating that Cooper “exerted a seminal influence on the stillborn Southern nation.” He focuses, however, on the professor’s deism and his clashes with the religious elite. In fact, Sugrue states that some South Carolinians disliked Cooper after his nullification position, while the present case study emphasizes Cooper’s perennial popularity. The historian further claims that Cooper was not really a southerner and, therefore, proved incapable of understanding and sympathizing with the students’ Southern culture of honor. Chapter

¹⁴ Michael Sugrue, “South Carolina College: The Education of an Antebellum Elite” (Unpublished manuscript: Columbia University, 1992), abstract, 44, 99. His piece “We Desire Our Rulers to be Educated Men” in Roger L. Geiger, ed., *The American College in the Nineteenth Century* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), is a summary of his dissertation’s conclusions.

two of this work, in contrast, argues that Cooper's experiences in Britain and France prepared him to embrace Southern culture on arrival.¹⁵

Sugrue, oddly, contends that SCC aligned with Federalism rather than Republicanism. In his opinion, Jeffersonian Republicanism was too egalitarian for Southern plantation owners. "[M]any holdovers from the conservative, elitist political discourse of Federalism can be found in the speeches of nineteenth century South Carolinian politicians, particularly those who were graduates of the College," he argues. He further states that Cooper and his associates despised Madison; however, the opposite fact is supported by Cooper's writings. Continuing this Federalist trope, Sugrue states that "papers like the *Charleston Mercury* were...inclined to reprint long passages from Garrison's *Liberator*; the South Carolinian gentry recognized a spiritual affinity with the imperious heroism of the avowed enemies of slavery." This work, in contrast, contends that the four professors embraced classical republicanism. For instance, Cooper declared himself for Thomas Jefferson and against John Adams, embraced agriculture over manufacturing, and affirmed the representative rule of the elite in contradiction to the somewhat democratic ideals of the North. The professors, as well as their students, harshly critiqued and generally disapproved of abolitionists.¹⁶

Sugrue's analysis of Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber differs from the present work as well. In Sugrue's mention of Thornwell, whom he says "exercised more influence on the College than any other figure in its history" other than Cooper, he explains the minister's proslavery belief solely in terms of his religion, whereas this study acknowledges Thornwell's religious motivations but further concludes that his travel

¹⁵ Sugrue, "South Carolina College," abstract, 118-135, 143-144, 148-149, 161-164, 186-187.

¹⁶ Sugrue, "South Carolina College," 16-17, 144, 241-242.

abroad inspired his proslavery philosophy. While Sugrue posits that Thornwell “indoctrinated his students thoroughly in the theological defense of slavery,” he does not explore the idea further. Aside from a discussion of Thornwell’s religious influence on the young men’s rowdy behavior, on the whole, Sugrue says little about him. While mentioning that the school prospered during Preston’s presidency, Sugrue does not discuss Preston’s interactions with the students. Believing that Lieber was, for the most part, antislavery, Sugrue surmised that he probably experienced guilt because he had not influenced his students against slavery. Much of his work discusses the college curriculum, the student’s dueling culture, and their general rebelliousness.¹⁷

Transatlantic Influences

This dissertation ventures beyond a regional Southern study to examine the transatlantic origins of the proslavery concepts in which students were carefully instructed at SCC. The four men had different European experiences, but arrived at nearly similar conclusions. Cooper, a resident of Great Britain until age thirty-five, loathed the sociopolitical system of his homeland. During the rest of his life in the United States, he lectured and wrote against the example of Britain, especially its emerging form of political economy. In his popular work *On the Constitution* (1826), he stated that southern slaves enjoyed a superior situation to the “majority of the laboring people of Great Britain,” who he considered victims of misery and starvation. He adopted a paternalistic philosophy, writing that masters should properly care for their slaves, providing them with proper food, clothing, housing, and medical care while avoiding harsh forms of punishment. Due to his experiences in France during the Revolution, he believed that enslavement of the Southern working class, which he identified as slaves,

¹⁷ Sugrue, “South Carolina College,” 45, 192-193, 197-198, 200, 203-209, 300.

constituted an important measure for social safety. When fighting against what he perceived to be Northern encroachments upon the South in the 1820s and early 1830s, Cooper believed that tariffs and manufacturing would destroy the South's agricultural paradise and place the region in Britain's miserable position, where the majority of the population stood in thrall to the federal government and a few manufacturing tycoons.¹⁸

Thornwell, a native South Carolinian, traveled to Britain in 1841 at the age of twenty-nine, where he was appalled by the misery of the working classes, especially as compared to the phenomenal wealth of English elites. As a well-known member of the Presbyterian Synod, he was critical of the hypocrisy of British abolitionist Christians who branded Southern slaveholders sinful while allowing their own poor to starve.

Thornwell's proslavery philosophy, published in pamphlet form and read throughout the South during the 1840s through the 1860s, proclaimed paternalistic slave care a responsibility, not only to the slave, but also to God. He also advocated the need to avoid the examples of Great Britain, Europe, and the North in order to preserve the ideal Southern republic.

A few years after his 1812 SCC graduation, Preston's father sent him on a two-year European tour. Landing first in Ireland in 1817, Preston, horrified by the starvation he witnessed, gave money and food to many suffering peasants. Similar scenes greeted the native Southerner on his sojourns through Italy and France. By contrast, he determined, Southern slaves enjoyed adequate food, shelter, and clothing, in addition to the master's protection. Likewise disturbed by what he perceived as the harsh British

¹⁸ Thomas Cooper, *Two Essays: 1. On the Foundation of Civil Government: 2. On the Constitution of the United States* (D. and J.M. Faust, 1826), 46. While a white working class did indeed exist in the antebellum South, as discussed in Victoria Bynum's work *Unruly Women: Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) among others, Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber defined black slaves as the South's working class.

oppression of Ireland, the police state of France, and the harsh Catholic government of the Italian provinces, Preston believed that these governments made the plight of the poor still worse. In later years as a United States Senator in Washington from 1834-1842, Preston condemned the abolitionists, citing the example of the suffering Irish poor and British factory operatives as proof of the movement's illogical nature. In his fight against what he viewed as Northern aggression, he pointed to the negative example of Britain and Europe, whose oppressive governments and manufacturing focus placed its citizens in economic difficulty. In contrast, he encouraged South Carolina, and the South as a whole, to fight against Northern abolitionism and federal tariff legislation in order to protect the socioeconomic system of slavery, the institution he believed was necessary to state and regional survival.

Lieber, a resident of Prussia until age twenty-six, had also traveled extensively throughout France, Greece, and Italy between 1815 and 1826. He resided in Britain for a year before relocating to the United States in 1827. During his twenty-one years in Columbia, South Carolina (1835-1856), he took a lengthy European tour in 1844, revisiting England, France, and Germany. Affected by his life in Germany, he admired many elements of serfdom and compared that system to Southern slavery. As a result of observing the poor in many nations, Lieber also believed that slaves had certain advantages over free workers. Although frequently amused by what he considered to be his slaves' foibles, and despite the racial prejudice he espoused as an Anglo-Saxon supremacist, Lieber was fundamentally a paternalist. He resented the "fanatical" abolitionist movement, disdaining its harsh judgment of Southern slaveholders and warning of its threat to the Union's stability.

Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's European travel increased their proslavery thought, despite the fact that many Europeans in the nineteenth century espoused antislavery beliefs. However, testimonials of various Southerners who visited Britain and the Continent opined that Europeans did not practice what they preached. As the proslavery thinkers examined here claimed, while many antislavery European elites, politicians, and intellectuals decried the slaves' condition in the Southern United States, a number of them abused and neglected their own free working classes, leaving their poor in squalor, paying them a non-living wage causing widespread starvation, and denying them a political voice. These transatlantic elements of Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's proslavery argument reappear in their students' arguments (see chapter six.)¹⁹

A few works briefly support the idea that European travel strengthened proslavery ideology. Landmark works on proslavery thought, such as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese's works *Slavery in White and Black*, *The Mind of the Master Class*, and Michael O'Brien's *Conjectures of Order*, recognize that European travels influenced the thinking of proslavery ideologues, but do not explain it in any detail. Indeed, Fox-Genovese and Genovese pave the way for a full-length monograph detailing and analyzing the ways in which European travel strengthened the proslavery thought of antebellum Southern ideologues.²⁰

¹⁹ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 230, confirms that abolition was extremely popular in Britain with citizens of all classes. "In the course of a single generation [1790s-1810s], abolitionism had evolved from a program of an innovative public contender into a settled fixture of [British] national policy. The...power of abolition was successfully ratified in legislative victories and governmental policy." In particular, "[t]he great popular mobilization of 1814 shocked the British government into making abolitionism a foreign policy priority." Slowly but surely, other European nations were becoming more abolitionist-minded, as well; "By 1814, the abolitionism movement had spawned the first human rights organization and altered much of the Western world's perspective on the future of slavery as an institution."

²⁰ Daniel Kilbride's *Being American in Europe, 1750-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 45, also mentions proslavery authors' reactions to the misery they witnessed in Europe.

The work of Eugene Genovese, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Michael O'Brien is never far away from the fundamentals of this project. Fox-Genovese and Genovese noted the great influence of trips abroad on many of the Southern elite in a few pages of the chapter "Travelers to the South, Southerners Abroad" in *Slavery in White and Black*. As they make clear, the fabulous wealth of this class enabled them to enjoy lavish transatlantic travel abroad, which they considered a requirement of cultural refinement. Many Southern gentry reacted similarly to poverty in Great Britain and made favorable comparisons of Southern slaves' situation with the free laboring poor. As Fox-Genovese and Genovese noted, while in London in 1826, Southern politician John Randolph concluded that southern slaves enjoyed a "far superior' moral and material position...relative to those of the British working classes." Josiah Nott, pro-slavery antebellum physician, wrote in the 1830s from England that "not even New York prepared him for the flood of paupers and beggars and for so much human misery." Henry Watkins Allen, a Louisiana sugar planter, wrote that, in contradistinction to British workers, "when old age comes on, [our black slaves] are not sent to the poorhouse or to 'linger and die' but [live] in good warm cabins, in the midst of abundance." United States Representative and author William J. Grayson stated that the British poor "endured evils more intolerable than any the negro in America has ever been forced to endure." In turn, Fox-Genovese and Genovese also outline what these Southern intellectuals deemed slavery's benefits.²¹

"[P]roslavery ideologues...use[d] their travels to mount a defense of slavery vis-à-vis free labor. American defenders of slavery insisted that slaves enjoyed better living conditions than workers in so-called free societies, especially England and the northern United States. They argued that a clear-eyed appraisal of the conditions of European workers would demonstrate the superior moral and economic foundations of the South's peculiar institution."

²¹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 124-129.

For some Southern intellectuals, enslavement of poor whites would have solved the problem of the suffering and sometimes militant white working-classes in both Europe and the North. “That the black slaves of the South fared better than the mass of the world’s free workers and peasants,” Fox-Genovese and Genovese maintained, “became gospel among Southern whites of all classes.” While Cooper, Preston, and Lieber did not advocate enslavement of whites per se, they strongly emphasized the concept that Southern slaves had superior lives to the white European working classes. Thornwell predicted that Europe and the North would have to employ an institution similar to slavery or experience a working class revolution. Although the lower classes’ pitiable plight generally figured as the Southern elites’ major concern, uprisings in Europe filled their hearts with fear for their own society’s safety. “The French Revolution,” the historians state, “consolidated previous and disparate strands of bourgeois individualism and set the terms for future battles.” In addition, theorists such as George Fitzhugh questioned the validity of capitalism since this new economic system relied on free labor rather than slave. These proslavery arguments proved persuasive among numerous Southern elites, Fox-Genovese and Genovese rightly contend. Fox-Genovese and Genovese demonstrated that proslavery concepts were intensified by European travel; this dissertation builds on their foundation by explaining how proslavery thought intensified by transatlantic influence permeated South Carolina, influenced the South, and was significant in the fomentation of secession.²²

Michael O’Brien, in *Conjectures of Order*, outlines Southern intellectual culture and the desire of Southern elites to order their personal world. Many Southerners, after all, assisted in the creation of the United States itself during the Revolutionary era.

²² Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 9, 11.

“Having made a world,” O’Brien explains, “they liked to sit in judgment, not only on ordinary matters...but on the fundamentals of what made a society, of how constitutions interacted with human nature, of how legislation affected the running of an economy or a household. They retained a revolutionary frame of mind and, therefore, when they began to think that the United States was no longer a thing they could control, many among them did not hesitate to destroy it and make another world.”²³

O’Brien investigates at length the importance of European influence on Southern culture and thought. Although O’Brien studies the reactions of Southerners to what they saw abroad and acknowledges its importance, he holds that reading of European authors and interacting with Europeans who immigrated to the South was perhaps more influential than literal travel experience. While important cultural exchange occurred in this way, this study will focus on the literal travel experience in which Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber were physically present in Europe, viewed working class conditions, spoke with abolitionists, and formed vivid impressions to bring back with them to South Carolina. For these individuals, their direct, firsthand experiences abroad proved far more influential than secondhand exposure with European ideas while in the United States.

Although he considered proslavery argument to be an important part of Southern intellectual thought, O’Brien believed that it was just one of many components of Southern culture. In contrast, Fox-Genovese and Genovese argue that proslavery thought

²³ Michael O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*. vol. 1. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3, 8. He dedicates an entire chapter to “strolling foreigners,” persons from abroad who made their homes in the South and greatly influenced its native population. “Abroad was not only a place far away, but also the house next door, if it was inhabited by an immigrant, as many Southern houses were,” O’Brien attests. “The abstract art of cultural traveling, which occurred when someone in Tuscaloosa sat down with a text produced in Weimar [or] Edinburgh...preoccupies much in the rest of [my] book.”

permeated all facets of Southern intellectual thought and culture. O'Brien dedicates one chapter to proslavery thought, where he outlines his position. He avows that white Southerners embraced slavery "not so much from principle as from necessity." O'Brien mentions that Charlestonian Edmund Brown in his work *Notes on the Origin and Necessity of Slavery* (1826) stated that slavery was necessary in "newly settled lands where labor had been expensive and subsistence abundantly cheap...it was the price to be paid for an adequate exploitation of the land, that is, for the establishment of civilization." Thomas Dew continued this line of thought, O'Brien argues, by stating that all plans of emancipation and colonization were impractical, if not impossible. O'Brien's summary of Dew's beliefs states that slavery "encouraged the development of civilization because it was linked to the invention of property and agriculture, it encouraged a self-interest in preserving life...[was] sympathetic to commerce...[and] elevated the condition of woman." In fact, "slavery was part of the origins of modern society, of what others would come to call capitalism." Fox-Genovese and Genovese, in contrast, referred to slave society as being distinct from capitalism. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber also described Southern society in anti-capitalist terms.²⁴

After analyzing numerous proslavery authors, O'Brien comes to the additional conclusion that proslavery argument rarely involved the slaves themselves. "In truth, real slaves had never been central. The genre had been a way for white Southerners to articulate a theory of society and they had always been more preoccupied with how whites related to one another in politics, economics, and society than how whites related to African Americans." Fox-Genovese and Genovese, by contrast, avow that Southerners

²⁴ O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 938-939, 943.

were definitely influenced by the slaves around them when formulating proslavery ideology. In *The World the Slaveholders Made*, Genovese states, “No matter how great the variations and circumstances, the master-slave relationship...left its mark on both participants. Specifically, it engendered a special psychology, mores, economic advantages and disadvantages, and social problems.” He continued, “No satisfactory assessment of any slaveholding regime or of any slaveholding class will be possible until we retrace its history to take full account of its specific interaction with the other classes in society, whether white or black, free or slave.” Although there is much truth in both Genovese and O’Brien’s analyses of the Southern intellectuals’ view of proslavery argument, this dissertation adheres more closely to Fox-Genovese and Genovese’s views than O’Brien’s. Although there are pieces of both strains of thought within them, Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s philosophies conform far more closely to the Genovese line.²⁵

In *The Mind of the Master Class*, Fox-Genovese and Genovese analyze an additional facet of proslavery ideology, the attitudes of proslavery Southern ideologues towards the French Revolution and the European revolutions of 1848. They indicate that the Southern elite used these revolutions, to justify slavery. Because slaves, who constituted the Southern working class in the minds of Cooper, Thornwell, and other ideologues, were well-cared for, Southern elites could sidestep the material conditions underwriting social revolution. These European revolutions figured prominently in the thinking of the intellectuals under consideration in this dissertation.

²⁵ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 991; Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 3-4.

Southern slaveowners hoped that a combination of paternal care and hierarchical power would protect them from slave revolt. In *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South*, Fox-Genovese and Genovese explain how the belief of paternalism played out in daily life in the Old South. Southern slaveholders believed they had a duty to care for their slaves and that blacks could not survive on their own outside of this relationship. Slaveholders expressed a need for their slaves' love and frequently believed that this love was a reality. Their work argues that slaveholders frequently considered white hired workers within their household, such as hired laborers, white overseers, and even governesses and tutors, less a part of their "family" than black slaves. Lieber, however, as an admirer of serfdom, looked after his children's Irish nurse in much the same way that he did his black slaves.²⁶

Paternalism figured largely in Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's proslavery philosophy. The four held a view of paternalism similar to Genovese's as expressed in his classic *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. "Paternalism defined the involuntary labor of the slaves as a legitimate return to their masters for protection and direction...Paternalism's insistence upon mutual obligations – duties, responsibilities, and ultimately even rights – implicitly recognized the slaves' humanity...A lord (master, padrone, patron, padrón, patrão) functions as a direct provider and protector to each individual or family, as well as to the community as a whole." Shearer Davis Bowman, in his comparative work *Masters and Lords*, expands the paternalist, or *paterfamilias*, concept: "[T]he classical Latin word *familia* 'originally meant a band of slaves' and 'thus implied an authoritarian structure and hierarchical

²⁶ Genovese and Fox-Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

order, founded on but not limited to relations of marriage and parenthood.” The professors’ ideal of paternalism reflected these broad foundations. Their interpretations ranged from Thornwell urging his slaves not to overexert themselves, despite the fact that, as a result, he lost considerable profit from his plantation, to Lieber’s boxing his slave Elsa’s ears when he was sufficiently enraged. Paternalism involved the two sides of traditional fatherhood: provision and protection on the one hand, and punishment on the other.²⁷

Paternalism hinged on antebellum racial theories; at its base was the idea that blacks were naturally childlike and in need of a white protector. Definitions of race, however, have altered drastically since the antebellum era. As Mark M. Smith asserts in *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses*, “[W]e know that race is a construct, an invented category that defies scientific verification.” Cooper, Preston, and Lieber, however, viewed race quite differently, considering it a biological reality that meant not only physical difference from Caucasians, but an inherent black inferiority. Although Thornwell was “not ashamed to call him [the black man] our brother” and took a monogenetic creationist view of both whites and blacks, he still evidently believed that blacks required white assistance and guidance. While this dissertation espouses the modern-day view of race expressed by Smith and others, it has been necessary to discuss the racial constructs and vocabulary of the four professors within the context of their times in order to explain their proslavery philosophy.²⁸

²⁷ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (NY: Vintage Books, 1974), 5; Shearer Davis Bowman, *Masters and Lords: Mid-19th Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 170. Thornwell’s plantation losses are discussed in chapter three and Lieber’s anger with Elsa in chapter five.

²⁸ Mark M. Smith, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2; Thornwell, *The Rights and the Duties of Masters* (Charleston: Steam-power press to Walker and James, 1850), 11.

The dissertation discusses the four professors' Southern worldview; in their minds, it was the ideal republic which preserved the representative rule of the elite and the dominance of agriculture over manufacturing, and was, therefore, worth fighting to protect in the political arena. Don H. Doyle in *The Cause of All Nations* states that Southerners espoused "principles of self-government and free trade," declaring themselves "an agrarian society" in a natural and fundamental contradistinction to the Northern "industrial" society with its "high protective tariffs." Considering the Southern states to be in point of fact the original American republic, Doyle points out, Confederates labeled 1861 "the eighty-fifth" year of "the Independence of the Confederate States," thereby declaring the Southern theory "that its independence was first established in 1776." Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston clearly believed that the South was the true republic and boldly claimed its legitimacy over the North and federal government. Drew McCoy, in *The Elusive Republic*, ably explains classical republicanism as developed by Jefferson and Madison, which then became a part of the antebellum Southern heritage. The agricultural ideal over British and European manufacturing permeates much of Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston's worldview.²⁹

Historians of European travel and abolition further inform this work. Daniel Kilbride, in his work *Being American in Europe*, elucidates the patterns and customs of American travelers in Europe during the early republic and antebellum periods. "Travelers," Kilbride asserts, were "seeking to define the US as a nation within the Western European community" during this time period. "[T]heir writings provide an

²⁹ Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (NY: Basic Books, 2015), 5, 37; Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, proved a useful reference for political events of the day, such as the tariff controversies, in which Cooper and Preston took an eager part.

unparalleled perspective on how Americans defined themselves within and against Europe in the formative period of national identity.” He believes that the majority of Southerners, while traveling in Europe, identified with the United States as a whole rather than with their section. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, however, continued this process a step further, defining the South against Europe. Antislavery author Sam Haynes’ *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* proved helpful since much of the four professors’ experiences took place in and against British abolitionism. He ably explains the animosity that Americans of the early republic held for Britain and their desire to prove themselves equal, if not superior, to their former colonial ruler. Americans disliked Britain’s class system, cultural superiority, and crowded cities, but, even more, Southerners resented Britain’s antislavery movement. These sentiments figure prominently in the four professors’ public and private writings.³⁰

Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s proslavery thought and influence are analyzed here by means of four case studies. Drew Gilpin Faust demonstrated effective use of this method in her work *The Sacred Circle*, which is primarily composed of case studies of five Southern intellectuals: William Gilmore Simms, James Henry Hammond, Beverly Tucker, Edmund Ruffin, and George Frederick Holmes. Faust includes their dedication to cultural analysis, their specific proslavery beliefs, and their scholarly letters and interactions with each other. Biographies have also proven very helpful. Douglas Ambrose’s *Henry Hughes and Proslavery Thought in the Old South*, although it is a book-length rather than a chapter-length analysis, is nonetheless a case study of Hughes’

³⁰ Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 7, 147. Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 8, 12, 15, 20, 44. The dissertation also references the classic abolition historiographies of John R. Oldfield and Seymour Drescher.

thought which examines the origins and manifestations of his proslavery philosophy. Ambrose “explore[s] the relations between Hughes’ intellectual interests and his proslavery convictions.” He explains that Hughes’ reading of European authors and travel abroad to Europe altered his worldview. Although Hughes’ warranteeism, a belief that all free labor should become slave labor and that the state should personally enforce the class system and slavery, is a different conclusion from that of Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, Ambrose’s study of an intellectual who “recognized the crisis between slavery and free labor as the great issue of the day” has much in common with this dissertation’s style and method.³¹

Drew Gilpin Faust’s early work, *Ideology of Slavery*, explains the fundamental nature of proslavery argument and why it is not only acceptable, but also necessary, for historians to study this branch of thought to truly understand antebellum Southern society. “Historians have come to view the proslavery argument less as evidence of moral failure and more as a key to wider patterns of beliefs and values,” she explained to those who considered the morality of proslavery historians dubious. “The defense of human bondage, they recognize, was perhaps more important as an effort to construct a coherent southern social philosophy than as a political weapon of short-lived usefulness during the height of sectional conflict.” Hers is an early work establishing the importance of antebellum Southerners’ proslavery ideology, placing the institution of slavery at the core of Southern society, and validating the legitimacy of studying proslavery argument. To prevent any possible misunderstandings, I state, with Fox-Genovese and Genovese, that investigating proslavery thought is in no way “slighting [slavery’s] cruelties and

³¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), x; Douglas Ambrose, *Henry Hughes and Proslavery Thought in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 2-3.

abominations” nor does it “absolve white slaveholders from collective and personal responsibility for their crimes against black people.”³²

Chapter Summary

The first chapter of the dissertation sets the stage by introducing the reader to the antebellum world of South Carolina’s state college, SCC. Despite the impulsive lawlessness of the students, rebellious young men from elite families, Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s unusual charisma inspired devotion from their pupils. A close look at the four professors’ teaching styles, their writings, and the testimonials of their admiring alumni explains how these particular individuals influenced their graduates, many of whom became the Southern leaders of the nineteenth century.

The next four chapters constitute separate case studies which delve into the proslavery and pro-Southern thought, writing, and action of Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber in turn. The first section of each case study examines the subject’s personal European travel experiences. Following segments examine the subject’s public and personal writings to reveal how their European sojourns shaped their resulting social, political, and educational contributions.

The sixth and final chapter discusses Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s specific proslavery and pro-Southern influences on their impressionable college students. While the first half of the chapter deals with examples of the four professors’ training, the second half discusses the later lives of the alumni themselves. After all, the actions of the alumni provide the most salient testimony to the validity of this argument. General statistics as well as specific examples communicate that Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and

³² Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1981), x, 1-4, 6; Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 5.

Lieber's students developed into virulent Southern leaders who altered the course of history along the lines of the philosophies they had learned both by precept and example at SCC. A detailed spreadsheet, found in Appendix A, provides over two hundred names of the four professors' students, along with their specific sociopolitical role in Southern society. SCC alumni led the state and the region to secession, through the Civil War, and back toward a semblance of the old ways during the Redeemer period. Cooper, Lieber, Thornwell, and Preston's sphere of influence at SCC set South Carolina and Southern political events in motion for the majority of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER ONE

POPULAR, PROMINENT PROFESSORS: THOMAS COOPER, JAMES HENLEY THORNWELL, WILLIAM CAMPBELL PRESTON, FRANCIS LIEBER, AND SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE

Introduction

Contemporaries spoke admiringly of the wealth of knowledge available at SCC. College librarian Edward L. Johnston, for example, moved north in the 1830s, but declared himself disappointed by the academic circle he found there. “[I]n comparison to the intellectuals of Columbia, [these] seemed like lightweights. There was ‘nobody with Dr. Cooper’s Atlantean shoulders, fit to prop a whole world of volumes,’ Johnston lamented, ‘nor Lieber’s sturdy German grasp, that wields so much, by dint of taking every thing by its handle; nor Preston’s noble and elegant capacity that possesses itself, in a glance, of the better parts of all knowledge.’” Many fathers who possessed sufficient means to send their sons to the Northern houses of learning chose to send them to Southern schools, where they could receive pro-Southern training in areas like slavery and state supremacy at the hands of competent professors.³³

South Carolina College (SCC) of Columbia, South Carolina, was founded in 1801 and began operation in 1805. From that year until 1862, when it closed because the entire student body enlisted for Confederate service, the college served as the linchpin for South Carolina’s intellectual, social, and political ideas. Four professors, three of whom also served terms as president, stood as the primary leaders of this greenhouse for the next two

³³ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 49.

generations of Carolina's male elite. Thomas Cooper, James Henley Thornwell, William Campbell Preston, and Francis Lieber's charisma, noted speaking abilities, exceptional scholarship, and genuine interest in their students' intellectual development made their messages all the more effective at influencing the minds of the young men.

In 1819, the academic standing of the college improved noticeably with the arrival of Thomas Cooper, who also did more than anyone else in the college, and perhaps Columbia, to advance proslavery argument and the rights of the Southern republic. For fifteen years he taught eager young men through his political speeches, classroom lectures, and prolific and widely read writings featured in newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and books. In *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826), a textbook he developed from classroom lectures, as well as the shorter version, *Manual of Political Economy* (1833), he warned his students, future Southern leaders, to avoid Britain's example of manufacturing and impoverished masses by preserving slavery, which he considered a better alternative for the working classes that also held them in bounds, and a classical republican agricultural system in which commerce and manufacturing remained small and subordinate to the farming ideal.

Cooper in turn trained Thornwell, who served at the college for eighteen years. After witnessing the misery of the British poor, Thornwell preached paternalism for the good of the slave, concluded that the Southern republic was the best of all possible worlds, and filled the students with zeal to preserve it. Although Thornwell was a native South Carolinian and taught at SCC for four years before his travel to Britain, his extant proslavery writings are all post-1841, after his time in Europe. Preston, in addition to holding the offices of president and professor for five years and serving as a college

trustee for sixteen years, also deeply influenced students during his years as a Richland District representative in Columbia's State House in the 1820s and early 1830s. SCC students crowded the Statehouse to listen with rapt attention to his declamations. Advocating southern rights (such as Carolinians' right to protest the 1828 and 1832 tariffs) and hatred of abolitionism with his legendary oratorical skill, Preston inculcated a generation of students with his views: namely, slavery's positive good and the pressing need to avoid outside interference from Britain, the North, and the federal government.

It is true that Lieber complained of slavery in some of his letters and in journals; however, his behavior during his twenty-one years at SCC (1835-1856) was that of a Southern proslavery man who sold, rented, threatened, and complained about his slaves and enjoyed close friendships with prominent Southerners. Interestingly, his greatest declarations against slavery are found in letters to Northerners whom he desired to impress. In his letters to his wife, Matilda Lieber, and to his confidante, a Boston lawyer and political moderate named George Hillard, his actual feelings and behavior became apparent. In addition, he did not use his professorial influence to sway students against slavery, and, on close examination, actually supported the institution instead. For instance, Lieber made no secret of his admiration for John C. Calhoun. He also assigned Thomas Cooper's *A Manual of Political Economy* (1833), which blatantly supported slavery, as required reading for his political economy courses. The students were acquainted with Lieber's retinue of slaves and would have witnessed his interactions with them, since faculty and students resided on the same small campus.

I. The College

SCC seems very small in terms of today's colleges, but it was, indeed, a thriving, substantial institution of learning within the antebellum South. The area known today as the Horseshoe comprised the entire campus. Professors' homes, such as the duplex Lieber and Thornwell's families shared, students' dormitories, classrooms where Cooper taught chemistry and political economy, the chapel where Thornwell preached and Preston gave stately addresses, and the dining hall, known then as Steward's Hall, was encompassed within that tree-lined circle of land. When Cooper arrived in 1819, the school boasted 100 students and five faculty members. By the 1830s, six to eight professors and three to four tutors instructed approximately 142 students. During Preston's presidency in 1848, the number had risen to 221 students, between eight and ten professors, and the same amount of tutors. Between 1801 and 1862, 1,762 men graduated from SCC.³⁴

The students, almost entirely the wealthy sons of South Carolina's elite, many of whom were used to having their own way at home, proved notoriously difficult to discipline and instruct. The privileged students regularly skipped classes, recitations, and chapel. When not studying, their favorite pastimes ranged from singing, reciting poetry, and playing card games to eating at taverns, becoming intoxicated, visiting prostitutes, and committing acts of vandalism and theft. In 1822, Cooper wrote his old friend Thomas Jefferson about his difficulties as president: "Every student in College holds himself bound to conceal any offence against the Laws of the Land as well as the Laws of the College: the robbing of henroosts, the nightly prowling about to steal Turkeys [sic] from all the houses in the neighborhood are constant practices, among a set of young men who

³⁴ Baker, Betsworth, Bush, Conlon, Kutzler, McIntyre, Oswald, Wilson, and Zeise, "Slavery at South Carolina College." Statistics for Cooper's time are found in Edwin Green's *A History of the University of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1916), 31, with number of graduates on page 439.

would never forgive you, if you doubted their honor.” One night, Lieber stepped outside of his home [today Lieber College] for a breath of fresh air when he spotted a student carrying a turkey. He knew that stealing townspeople’s turkeys was a favorite sport of these spoiled teenagers. Lieber disliked being a disciplinarian, but ran after the boy. He tripped and fell, while the turkey-laden student escaped. In a heavy German accent, he shouted, “All this for two thousand dollars [a year]!”³⁵

Students ventured beyond stealing poultry into still more serious offences. In 1824, Cooper referred a student to the trustees for expulsion because he was “a habitual frequenter of houses of ill fame...deeply engaged in Gambling, both within and without the walls of the College,” and, as if that level of college rule-breaking was insufficient, “committed an assault of the most violent kind upon an individual of the Law.” Further violence resulted from a dinnertime disagreement. The food left much to be desired in the steward’s hall; fresh meat or vegetables were rare. As a result, two young men fought a duel over who had the right to a dish of trout; one died instantly, the other was injured for life. On an occasion in the 1820s, a student defaced the chapel in what Professor Maximilian LaBorde described as “an obscene manner.” The infamous Preston Brooks, who would later cane Charles Sumner on the Senate floor, was expelled in his senior year (1839) for having stormed to the Columbia jail, brandishing his pistols, to free his incarcerated brother. More humorously, a song that one student, James Chalmers, wrote in 1852 illustrates the extreme difficulties faculty struggled with due to the students’ tavern-visiting and drunkenness. It is said that the six-foot brick wall, the remains of which are extant on the campus, was constructed to keep the students in, but proved

³⁵ Baker, Betsworth, Bush, Conlon, Kutzler, McIntyre, Oswald, Wilson, and Zeise, “Slavery at South Carolina College”; Cooper to Jefferson, Feb. 14, 1822, Cooper Papers, SCL; Colyer Meriwether, *History of Higher Education in South Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 175.

ineffective. “Uncle” Billy Maybin kept the Congaree House, a favorite forbidden haunt of the students until Maybin sold it in the 1850s. While most of the song discussed the pleasure of a convivial drinking atmosphere, the following embodied the casual attitude toward discovery and punishment:

Next Monday morning surely old Sheriff comes around,
And you’re up before the faculty for going up the town,
“Did you go into an eating house?” “Did you take a drink or no?”
Oh, yes, sirs; took a drink or two at Billy Maybin’s, O!³⁶

SCC’s curriculum was classical in nature, and all students prepared for and received the same degree upon graduation. Studies included mathematics, moral philosophy, chemistry, geology, mineralogy, history, political economy, logic, Greek, Latin, and *belles lettres* (literature). Recitations occurred two or three times per day, with study periods sandwiched in between. In 1854, for example, classes met five days a week at 7 a.m., 11 a.m., and 4 p.m., with one class on Saturday, and chapel twice a day (at sunrise and at 5 p.m.) Professors taught between five to fourteen hours. Lieber was the first to introduce lectures in his teaching, and they were instantly popular. Students borrowed Thornwell’s lecture notes so often that many pages were never returned to the files. Two debating societies, the Clariosophic and Euphradian, existed; virtually every student joined one. The extant recordings of their debates demonstrated the influence Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber wielded upon the students’ sociopolitical views concerning slavery (see chapter six.)³⁷

³⁶ Cooper in Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 2, Dec. 7, 1824, SCL; Baker, Betsworth, Bush, Conlon, Kutzler, McIntyre, Oswald, Wilson, and Zeise, “Slavery at South Carolina College”; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 344-345; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 3, Nov. 27, 1839, SCL.

³⁷ Baker, Betsworth, Bush, Conlon, Kutzler, McIntyre, Oswald, Wilson, and Zeise, “Slavery at South Carolina College”; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 202-204, 231.

The SCC library was one of the finest of its day, according to Michael O'Brien. Its stores, along with a few other book collections in the town, meant that "Columbia, South Carolina, was the richest place in the South to be placed for books." Columbia's importance to the state was heightened by its relative nearness to Charleston, the social and commercial hub of the region from whence many of the young scholars hailed and returned after graduation. The SCC library, which, in addition to books they selected, held many of Cooper, Lieber, Thornwell, and Preston's writings, further resources to prepare the students to take their future positions as social and political proslavery leaders.³⁸

The four professors' proslavery instruction was reinforced by the physical presence of campus slaves. Enslaved persons lived and worked on the campus, within sight and hearing of every student. The college forbade the students to bring their own slaves, preferring to charge a "servant's fee" of two dollars per year for the upkeep of the slaves that SCC owned or rented. These individuals did the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and the grounds upkeep; in fact, slaves built the campus brick by brick with their own hands. Professors were involved in decisions to purchase or rent college slaves and directed their specific employment and treatment. Few records remain of the college slaves; fuller records exist concerning professors' slaves who lived on the campus along with their masters. Students were personally acquainted with Cooper's trusted valet, Sancho, Lieber's saucy cook, Betsy, and Thornwell's religious-minded slave, Amanda. It

³⁸ O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 520-521.

is intriguing that a popular form of freshman initiation from the 1850s into the early twentieth century was “blacking the face of the new men.”³⁹

Edwin Green discusses the history of slavery at the college in his 1916 history. “The college purchased its first slave...Jack; he cost \$900.” In 1833, the trustees approved the purchase of “another negro, Henry,” who the board later sold. SCC slaves Jim Ruffin and Jim Blue served students at meals and received meals there in return. During the 1850s, Green explains, “the college was hiring two servants: Henry and Jack in 1856, and Henry and Tom in 1860.” Lieber once remarked in a letter to his son Oscar that college “servants” Tom and Charles trimmed the ivy on the Lieber-Thornwell home. Green reports that, when students hit or otherwise abused college “servants,” they were “severely punished,” although actual records indicate that they were generally forgiven after a mere reprimand.⁴⁰

During state legislative sessions, SCC students ventured to the capitol to revel in whatever excitement might be afoot there. In the 1820s and 1830s, Preston, famous for his powerful delivery of anti-tariff philosophy, and Cooper who, though not formally a politician, delivered many an enthusiastic speech encouraging Carolinians to “calculate the value of the Union,” frequented the chamber and significantly swayed the thinking of many students, Columbians, and South Carolinians. Daniel Hollis, in his 1951 *History of South Carolina College*, states, “Truly these must have been entertaining days for the college boys, with elections, conventions, proclamations, speeches, militia drills, and Thomas Cooper performing in the State House.” Colyer Meriwether, in his 1889 *History*

³⁹ Baker, Betsworth, Bush, Conlon, Kutzler, McIntyre, Oswald, Wilson, and Zeise, “Slavery at South Carolina College”; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 253. Jennifer Oast describes slaves’ daily responsibilities at the College of William and Mary, which were quite similar to the SCC routine, in *Institutional Slavery*, 127, 133-138.

⁴⁰ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 307-308.

of *Higher Education in South Carolina*, stated, “A strong tendency to politics was necessarily given by the presidents. Cooper meddled with politics, as he did with everything else...Preston had been [a] United States Senator.” He also added the observation that “Thornwell was a power in politics, although never holding office.” Through his noted authorship, sermons and speeches within the state, and prominent leadership, Thornwell influenced SCC students, South Carolinians, and Southerners on political topics (see chapter three.)⁴¹

Students’ praise of Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber is often fulsome, even hagiographic at times. The flowery language of alumni reminiscences, many of which were written many years later during the Victorian period, rather compounds the nature of their narratives, making the accounts sound even more like paeans of unconditional praise than they otherwise would. Representative examples of the students and alumni’s laudatory accounts are included in this and the final chapter, not because they show a perfectly balanced and accurate picture of the four professors, who, after all, were human beings with shortcomings, but because it is important to understand the hold that the professors had over the minds of their students. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s remarkable popularity aided them significantly in influencing the next generation of Southern leaders.

Professor popularity was not a given in antebellum Southern colleges, as Robert Pace explains in *Halls of Honor*. In many cases, “mockery and derision of the faculty became a favorite sport” of teenage Southern collegians. John Thelin’s educational history confirms Pace’s conclusion; at the University of Virginia, for example, “[i]t was

⁴¹ Daniel Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, vol. 1, *South Carolina College* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 113; Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 162-163.

considered appropriate for students to challenge professors, to take umbrage at alleged insults by faculty.” Two more extreme examples of faculty dislike occurred at the University of Virginia; “in 1839 a professor was publicly horsewhipped by students” and in 1840, when “another professor was fatally shot in front of his home on the Lawn by a masked student.” SCC students, for instance, looked down on some of the other professors at the college. Their practically unqualified respect and reverence for the four men, both during college and later life, aids in explaining these professors’ sway over their minds.⁴²

II. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, & Lieber: Popular Professors

A. Thomas Cooper

Thomas Cooper’s popularity and strong presence were instantly apparent in 1819, when he relocated to South Carolina from Pennsylvania to accept the Professorship of Chemistry. Maximilian LaBorde attested that Cooper was thought to be a man “of great genius and learning,” that his “influence was deep and abiding,” and that the “Trustees, and people of South Carolina” greatly venerated him, allowing him “to wield an almost irresponsible power.” Only a year later, the trustees were so pleased with Cooper’s performance that they not only added the Professorships of Political Economy and of Geology and Mineralogy to his responsibilities, but also made him president *pro tempore* of the college. Colyer Meriwether wrote that SCC’s political economy course stood “abreast of the most advanced in the country,” noting that Cooper’s textbook, *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826), was one of the first to be published in the United States. In 1821 Cooper was awarded the college presidency permanently, in which, according to

⁴² Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 18; Thelin, *History of Higher Education*, 52; Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 184.

Hollis, he “was given almost carte blanche in managing [college] affairs.” Cooper’s numerous trustees’ reports demonstrate that he concerned himself with all aspects of the college, ranging from new curriculums of study, serious discipline issues, college servants, the dining hall, etc. The president also exerted his influence by selecting books for the library that he deemed valuable to the students’ education. Cooper directed the use of a “special appropriation of five thousand dollars,” over \$134,143 in 2016. LaBorde, though prejudiced against Cooper because of his Deist beliefs, admitted that “No man of his time was more generally known to the people of the State.” When he retired in 1834, the college conferred upon Cooper, at Preston’s request, the degree “Doctor of Laws.”⁴³

During his fifteen years at SCC, Cooper turned a mediocre chemistry department into the gem of the institution. Most notably, he was a spellbinding professor: LaBorde, another SCC faculty member, believed that “a better lecturer” or “a finer teacher” never existed. Considering his wide and unusual personal experiences, his fund of classroom anecdotes provided entertainment for students in the midst of potentially dry subjects. “He had mingled intimately with the most remarkable men of the old and the new world, and had been an eye witness of some of the most stirring and interesting events recorded in history...With wonderful art he could weave a dinner with [famous scientist Dr. Joseph] Priestley, a glass of wine with Robespierre, a supper with the Brissotians [French revolutionary sect], or a race for the Convention against the Duke of Orleans, into a lecture upon asbestos, soda, or magnesia.” As a professor, Cooper felt “that for success the *attention* of the pupil must be secured, and that owing to the [dull] nature of the subject, it is sometimes necessary to resort to extraordinary expedients for this purpose.”

⁴³ Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 140; LaBorde, *History of South Carolina College*, 94-95, 119, 121, 151-155; Cooper, Trustees’ Report, May 1828, Cooper Papers, SCL; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 2, Dec. 8, 1831, SCL; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 77, 81.

Preferring clarity to ornament, he delineated “the great truths of science” to his students in an organized style.⁴⁴

At Cooper’s death in May, 1839, the *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review* vouched for his outstanding professorial ability. “He showed great mastery of his subject [and] a perfect acquaintance with every addition made to it from any quarter of the globe,” which was no simple feat in that day of relatively slow dissemination of information. “His lectures were not only instructive, but” also included “illustrations from the whole circle of science and the whole field of literature” and possessed a certain “perspicuity and simplicity that adapted them at once to the comprehension of learners, and recommended them to the taste of the learned.”⁴⁵

J. Marion Sims, a well-known gynecologist who remained proslavery even after relocating to New York City, warmly remembered his old professor in his autobiography, *The Story of My Life* (1884.) “The other young men who were going with me to Columbia [in 1831] were the sons of rich men, planters,” he recounted. “Dr. Cooper was president of the college. He was a man considerably over seventy years old, a remarkable looking man.” Due to student affection, “[h]e was never called Dr. Cooper, but ‘Old Coot.’ ‘Coot’ is the short for ‘cooter,’ a name generally applied south to the terrapin, and the name suited him exactly. He was less than five feet high, and his head was the biggest part of the whole man. He was a perfect taper from his head down to his feet; he looked like a wedge with a head on it.” Remembering more than just Cooper’s odd appearance

⁴⁴ Maximilian LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College, 1801-1865* (Charleston, SC: Walker, Evans, and Cogswell, 1874), 166-168.

⁴⁵ “The Late Dr. Cooper,” *The U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review*, Vol. 6, No. 19, July 1839, 74.

and likeableness, Sims also recalled, “He was a man of great intellect and remarkable learning.”⁴⁶

Cooper’s students particularly proved their esteem and support for him during the Board of Trustees’ inquisition in 1831 and 1832. Certain trustees stated that Cooper’s publications and classroom lectures had disparaged the Christian religion and the inspiration of the Bible in ways that were “offensive to [the students’] parents and guardians.” Cooper blamed the attack on “the political opponents of the States Rights Party...the Clergy and leading members of the Calvinistic persuasion,” feeling it was “a renewed attempt, so often made, to bring the South Carolina College under Presbyterian influence and controul [sic].” Cooper’s students, past and present, sent letters to the state legislature, testifying that he had not prejudiced their minds against Scripture or church tradition. A few, such as Thornwell, the future Presbyterian minister, testified at the State House. Hollis affirms that “every student examined without exception” testified to Cooper’s “caution, his impartiality, his faithful discharge of duty, and his total abstinence from all interference with the religious opinions of the young men under his care.” The students “declared upon oath, that Dr. Cooper was accustomed, on all occasions, to direct the students that it was their duty, while at college, to abide by the religion of their parents.”⁴⁷

Even so, Cooper asserted his right under the constitution of South Carolina and the United States to not only espouse, but also speak freely of his personal religious beliefs. He felt it particularly ironic in a time when the state was voicing its disapproval

⁴⁶ J. Marion Sims, *The Story of My Life*, H. Marion Sims, ed. (NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1, 3, and 5 Bond Street, 1884), 80, 82, 105, 107, 109.

⁴⁷ Cooper, “Dr. Cooper’s Defence before the Board of Trustees,” *Times and Gazette*, Dec. 14, 1832, 1-3, 7; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 108, 114. Cooper Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, SCL contains student testimonials on Cooper’s behalf.

for federal tariff laws that certain Carolinians hypocritically tried to deny him his right of free speech. “Look at your own proceedings,” he wrote in his defense. “Is Nullification even yet a popular measure? Is not the abuse thrown on you, unmeasured and unqualified?” Cooper felt it was his duty to be candid about his beliefs with his students: “They have a right to expect from their professor, no concealment, no shrinking from unpopular difficulties, but a full and honest investigation, without suppression or disguise.” He believed that “the reputation of the College [and] its professors” would be compromised if there was “any impression that...teachers are directed or inclined to avoid difficulties, because they are unpopular.” The legislature acquitted Cooper in 1832, but he voluntarily resigned the presidency due to public disapproval, although he retained for a time his teaching responsibilities.⁴⁸

Cooper’s personality and character made him popular not only with his students, but also with Columbia’s citizens. LaBorde complimented “his personal virtue,” declaring that Cooper was always “open, frank, and free from all dissimulation.” His personality enchanted Columbia’s elite: “In his social relations he was most agreeable. He would throw off the dogmatism of the teacher, and be like other men.” Well-known as being a “fine table companion,” Cooper’s “fund of incident, anecdote, and story, constituted a vast treasure-house, from which he would draw to illustrate every possible topic of conversation.” LaBorde believed that even the most cosmopolitan and learned individuals “could have found in his table-talk much that was entertaining and instructive, and worthy of preservation.” Cooper found further approval with Columbians because “[h]e was punctilious in the discharge of the duties of the citizen, and set a high

⁴⁸ Cooper, *The Case of Thomas Cooper, M.D., President of the South Carolina College* (Columbia, SC: Times and Gazette Office, 1831), 1, 11-12.

value upon such privileges” and “was kind as a neighbor.” These qualities greatly enhanced his social and political influence within Columbia and the South.⁴⁹

In addition to being on friendly, even excellent, terms with his students and neighbors, Cooper was also loyal to SCC and the state. His fellow faculty member LaBorde attested, “He loved the College, and was flattered by his position. He labored honestly and industriously for what he conceived to be its best interests.” College historian Daniel Hollis describes Cooper’s tenure and influence: “In truth, Cooper’s career at the college resembled the course of a meteor; he flashed across the heavens with brilliant light and exploded. The results never quite disappeared.” Cooper preached “laissez-faire doctrines and states’ rights philosophies to his impressionable students and became a ‘Schoolmaster of States’ Rights’ whose influence did not stop at the college walls.” Hollis credits him as the architect of the South Carolina Doctrines, which consisted of Cooper’s “belief and ardent exposition of laissez-faire principles, states’ rights and decentralization, slavery, and other dogmas.” The results of Cooper’s instruction on slavery and states’ rights left a deep imprint on South Carolina and the South’s political course of action (see chapter six.)⁵⁰

B. James Henley Thornwell

Thornwell was one of Cooper’s college pupils, graduating in 1831. When he became a professor himself, he stood second only to Cooper in terms of antebellum influence on the college. In his student days, according to his friend Benjamin Palmer, he had “made an extraordinary impression upon the Faculty” and “was particularly a favorite with Cooper and [Robert] Henry.” These two professors, “struck by his genius

⁴⁹ LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 176-177.

⁵⁰ LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 175; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 78, 82, 102.

and attainments, predicted with confidence his future distinction.” He returned to his alma mater at the young age of 25, serving as Professor of Logic, Criticism, and Metaphysics from 1837-1840, then as Professor of Sacred Literature and Evidences of Christianity from 1841-1855, in addition to the college chaplaincy. Enjoying notable admiration and respect from the trustees, Thornwell also held the office of president from 1851-1855. He left the college to teach at the Columbia Theological Seminary, but also served as a SCC trustee from 1857 until his death in 1862. A devout Presbyterian minister, Thornwell took his SCC faculty position seriously, one in which “he would be entrusted with the care of souls, and those of a most important class in society,” his close friend Benjamin Palmer remembered. Although Thornwell valued the souls of all human beings, he greatly appreciated the opportunity to inspire students to a belief in God who would later be in a position to share that belief with many others. The professor wrote in 1846, “For myself, I feel the education of these boys to be a solemn trust and my solicitude is even greater for their habits than for their attainments. I wish to see them leave these walls prepared to discharge the office of life with credit...and distinction to the State.” Thornwell certainly influenced many of the South Carolina elite in favor of slavery and states’ rights; these young men believed they were acting with “distinction” when they later led the state into secession and the Civil War (see chapter six.)⁵¹

In 1889, less than twenty years after Thornwell’s death, historian Colyer Meriwether wrote of him, “If not the greatest, his was certainly one of the greatest intellects that the college ever trained. He strongly impressed both students and professors” as well as notables of his time, such as John C. Calhoun, who expected him to have a political career, and the famous historian, George Bancroft of Massachusetts.

⁵¹ Thornwell, Trustees’ Report, May 1, 1846, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

Around 1845, Thornwell received three honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees from Jefferson College of Pennsylvania, Hampden Sydney College of Virginia, and Centre College of Kentucky.⁵²

Faculty colleague Joseph LeConte wrote the year after Thornwell resigned from the college, “The students here were very high-spirited and honorable, but also quite turbulent. They had been accustomed to being governed not so much by law as by the personal influence and eloquence of Thornwell, the previous president.” The fact that Thornwell governed rebellious, fiery students such as those at SCC by use of his charismatic personality may sound exaggerated, but additional accounts support LeConte’s statement. During his time as president, Preston remarked that Thornwell’s “moral power in the College was superior even to the authority of the law.” Benjamin Palmer wrote that “by the force of his personal character, he moulded the opinions and shaped the conduct of the students” and did not have to resort to “that stern authority with which the laws of the College invested him.” Instead, “his unflinching method was so to impress convictions of duty upon the conscience, as to render the obedience spontaneous, rather than forced.” The students had great respect for his scholarly accomplishments and statewide popularity: “All men throughout the State conceded to Dr. Thornwell this rare endowment” of genius; and his students “rejoiced in him as the ornament and pride of the institution, and felt as though a portion of his honor was reflected upon each of them.”⁵³

His colleague LaBorde wrote that Thornwell’s “scholarly tastes,” “enthusiasm,” and “talent for easy communication” ideally suited him to the career of college professor. This power of expression was significant, because it aided Thornwell in inculcating the

⁵² Palmer in Thornwell, *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1875), 155, 269; Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 167.

⁵³ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 392.

students in proslavery argument and Southern political rights. “Always master of his subject” in the classroom, he proved well able “to disentangle it of the rubbish with which it was encumbered, and, seizing upon its main points, to press them with a power and earnestness which were sure to make an impression.” Despite the fact that “Logic, and the Metaphysical and Moral Sciences” were to many dry, dull subjects, he managed to spark student interest. “In most youthful minds their very abstract nature produces a degree of repulsiveness which is not easily overcome; but...he so completely vindicated their utility and elevating tendencies, that they are now as favorite pursuits as any others in the College.”⁵⁴

Analyzing prominent philosophers, Thornwell even developed his own metaphysical philosophy, which he also imparted to the students. Of his learning, LaBorde wrote, “he has not only swallowed down, but digested libraries.” Students appreciated the fact that “[h]e is fond of a joke, tells a good one himself, and laughs heartily.” As president, Thornwell instituted the popular change from oral to written examinations, abolished compulsory dining hall attendance by approving six boarding houses as culinary alternatives, and insisted that the college continue classical learning rather than teach trades. The decision to continue classical learning kept SCC a gentleman’s college, rather than a trades college that would cater to the middle and perhaps the working classes. SCC would continue as an incubator for the next generation of Southern politicians and social leaders.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 259; LaBorde, *History of South Carolina College*, 315, 347-349,

⁵⁵ LaBorde, *History of South Carolina College*, 350-353, 356-357, 371; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 167, 169.

Remembering that he himself had been elevated into the upper class by the generosity of patrons who observed his potential and paid his way to SCC, Thornwell practiced philanthropy so a few poor young men could attend the college. His friend Palmer attested, “Throughout his connexion with the College, he was rarely without a beneficiary on his hands, whom he...assisted in obtaining a liberal education.” Thornwell informed the Board of Trustees in 1852, “I have permitted a young man to go on in College during the present quarter. He is poor and meritorious, and I could not find it in my heart to turn him out of College. I paid for him the last quarter out of my own pocket, and defrayed most of his expenses the past year; and rather than he shall be sent away now,” he assured them, “I will become responsible for him again. But cannot the Board remit his tuition during the remainder of his course?” One student that he sponsored contracted typhus in his senior year; “he was nursed...in Dr. Thornwell’s home,” where he died. This demonstration of his concern for his students increased Thornwell’s popularity not only to those that he assisted, but also to their fellow students who heard of his generosity.⁵⁶

Palmer further recounted, “Dr. Thornwell...commanded the love of young men by the fullness of his sympathy in their struggles with temptations and defeats, in their aspirations, their hopes, their joys.” Despite the propensity for disobeying rules coupled with an incredible sense of honor that the college boys possessed, “the most reckless among them, when brought into straits by their indiscretions, would lay their case in his hands with a perfect assurance.” The young men also asked his opinion on social questions, “and his decision, supported by the reasons he was always able to advance,

⁵⁶ Thornwell, Trustees’ Report, May 4, 1852 and Nov. 23, 1846, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 319-320.

were generally accepted as final upon all questions of propriety.” He also, with the use of logic, settled moral and personal disputes of the students. Given these details, it logically follows that many of Thornwell’s students also accepted his worldviews.⁵⁷

As an instructor, Thornwell’s “first care was to study the mind of the pupil, to take its gauge, and to note its characteristics.” By assigning a textbook and giving his own detailed explanation of the subject in class, Palmer reported, Thornwell prepared the student to respond to questions during recitations: “Interrogation was poured upon the student’s head like a shower of hail, until he was driven back through all the steps of a rigorous analysis.” After the student made his own statements, Thornwell would then give a “lucid explanation, [with] searching analysis [and] resistless logic,” turning the “class-room” into “a gymnasium, where the living mind was taught to...work itself out to the consciousness of knowledge.” Rather than just instructing his students in knowledge and facts, Thornwell taught his students how to think, creating future strategists who would think for a state and a region.⁵⁸

Michael O’Brien, in his chapter on Southern theology in *Conjectures of Order*, comments on Thornwell’s dedication in his role as chaplain. “He performed services in the college chapel, but he lent books to the skeptical, held a ‘meeting in his recitation room every Wednesday evening open to any of the Students that wish to come,’ where the Bible was read, prayers said, and instruction administered to as many as thirty students, some of them present ‘only for curiosity,’ some with earnest intent freshly awakened.” Correspondence with former students demonstrates that Thornwell influenced students in religious matters. Despite their sometimes hard-boiled attitudes,

⁵⁷ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 393.

⁵⁸ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 529-531.

many students greatly appreciated his concern for them. Edwin Green's 1916 history of the college states that one of the major reasons for building a larger college chapel in the 1850s was due to the popularity of Thornwell's sermons: "It was also felt that Dr. Thornwell, who was one of the greatest divines of the time, should have a suitable auditorium for the display of his oratorical powers." In 1848, the sophomore class gave Thornwell "a very elegant copy of the English Bible" for the chapel. At the students' request, his "Discourses on Truth," a sermon series presented in chapel, was compiled and published. On Calhoun's death in 1850, Thornwell gave a highly complimentary memorial sermon in his honor (see chapter six.)⁵⁹

Thornwell was known for his fair treatment of students, which they appreciated and often reciprocated in their turn. For example, the senior class respectfully petitioned Thornwell in writing to allow a classmate of theirs to remain in college, even though his offences had slated him for expulsion. Thornwell assured them in his reply, "Your opinion, simply as your opinion – is entitled to great weight – and when deliberately expressed, it will never fail to have that weight with me." Since he believed that the boys' "influence" could help reform the offending student's behavior, "I cheerfully acquiesce in your judgment." The offending student was reinstated, and the petitioning students' honor received a boost.⁶⁰

Students later recounted their personal impressions of Thornwell. Harry Hammond, James Henry Hammond's son, wrote a warm letter to Thornwell:

"Remembering with [what] pleasure and profit I listened to your instruction when a

⁵⁹ O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 1097; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 57, 60, 445; Thomas Neil to Thornwell, Nov. 19, 1851, and Trustees' Report, Nov. 22, 1848, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

⁶⁰ Thornwell to Harry Hammond, Jones, Earton, Edmonds, Buchanan, J.H. Hudson, and Porter, April 1, 1852, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

student in College, I beg leave now to ask your assistance in a very important matter.” He explained, “The Trustees at the University of Georgia at Athens, where I am Professor of Natural Sciences, are proposing to make some very great changes.” Trusting Thornwell’s advice, Hammond inquired as to where he could locate pertinent information to study out the questions the trustees were posing.⁶¹

James Lowndes, another of Thornwell’s students, later recounted at an alumni dinner at the 1901 SCC centennial celebration: “The most conspicuous honor man in my youth in academic circles, the scholastic hero of the day, was Dr. Thornwell.” In addition to his 1850s reputation, “[m]yth and legend had gathered around his [1829-1831] college career and tales were rife of his contemptuous triumphs over his professors and the surprises he gave his classmates.” Lowndes recalled, “He was to us as infallible as Aristotle and Sir William Hamilton. I remember now the fascinating subtleties with which he stimulated our young minds and the remorseless logic with which he destroyed fallacious theories of knowledge and unworthy theories of morals” in the classroom. Thornwell’s philosophies became those of his students, and remained with them even into old age and the twentieth century. Lowndes had been moved, for example, by Thornwell’s religious fervor: “In my ears are still ringing some of the impassioned sentences of those sermons which glorified the cheerless old College chapel [it was widely acknowledged to be an inferior building] and lifted us from the earth.”⁶²

In 1901, R. Means Davis, a SCC professor during the post-bellum period, recounted a story one of Thornwell’s students had shared with him about college life in

⁶¹ Harry Hammond to Thornwell, Aug. 9, 1859, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

⁶² James Lowndes, “The Alumni at Dinner” and Howard H. Caldwell, “Collegiate Romance,” quoted in Yates Snowden, “In the Days before the War,” in *The Centennial Celebration of the Granting of the Charter to the South Carolina College* (Charleston, SC: Lucas-Richardson, 1902), 44-46, 87.

the 1850s. “James H. Thornwell was a wonderful manager of men,” Davis explained. “An old student relates that, being asked to join in an agreement to ‘cut’ a lecture one day, he entered the agreement on one condition, ‘that Mr. Thornwell shall not be allowed to talk to us.’” The student evidently felt that he could not resist the professor’s personal appeal. “The agreement was made, but at the hour fixed upon by the class for its demonstration Mr. Thornwell somehow happened ‘to saunter among them engaged in friendly conversation until the bell rang and then said pleasantly: ‘As your bell has rung I will not detain you.’ He lifted his hat and walked off, and every student walked straight into the class room.” Davis said of Thornwell, “[I]n his chosen field of theology and moral philosophy, [he] is acknowledged to have no superior in America.” The statement may or may not have been accurate, but it demonstrates the readiness of Thornwell’s students and the people of South Carolina to accept his ideas as their own.⁶³

One particular event supports the testimonies to Thornwell’s remarkable leadership skills. In 1856, a year after Thornwell left the college to teach at the nearby Columbia Theological Seminary, a student was placed in the town jail. The student body, extremely indignant and always volatile, “succeeded in liberating their companion” by force. Two students planned to punish the town marshal who had arrested their comrade, and the rest of the student body assembled, carrying whatever weapons they could hastily gather together. The militia responded, and the town waited for a shot to start a rumble in the streets of Columbia. Respected citizens tried to reason with the young men, to no

⁶³ R. Means Davis, “Raison d’Être of South Carolina College,” in *The Centennial Celebration of the Granting of the Charter to the South Carolina College*, 41.

avail, and “a runner was dispatched for Dr. Thornwell,” who, though in the middle of a lecture at Columbia Theological Seminary, immediately rushed to the scene.⁶⁴

“Moving rapidly between the contending ranks,” Thornwell spoke: “‘Come back with me to the campus; and if I find you are in the right, and there be no redress but in fighting, I will lead you myself, and die in the midst of you.’ Turning upon his heel, and shouting ‘College! College!’ he walked in the direction of the campus, followed by the entire body.” Once the students sat down in the chapel, Thornwell reasoned with them, “representing the impropriety of such riotous demonstrations; and appealing to their magnanimity not to bring a stain upon...the College, which would make the State blush that she had created it.” The students listened to Thornwell, and the riot quickly ended. Palmer declared, “It is not at all unsafe to say, that he was the only man in South Carolina who could have achieved that thing.” It is possible that Thornwell preserved the reputation and existence of SCC by his intervention, enabling it to continue in its mission to educate the Southern white male elite.⁶⁵

In a letter to Governor Manning that was published in 1853, Thornwell pronounced his strong faith in the college: “It has made South Carolina what she is; it has made her people what they are; and from her mountains to her seaboard there is not a nook or corner of the State that has not shared in its healthful influence.” Without SCC, “[t]he low-country would still have sent its sons to Europe or the North, and the up-country would have been content with its fertile lands.” In Thornwell’s mind, Europe and the North would have served as highly destructive influences (see chapter three.) He argued that SCC was “the secret of the harmony which has so remarkably characterized

⁶⁴ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 395-396.

⁶⁵ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 395-396; Thornwell, “Commencement Address,” Dec. 6, 1852, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

our State...It was the community of thought, feeling and character, achieved by a common education within these walls [where] a common character was formed.”⁶⁶

Thornwell believed that education served as a shield of protection for South Carolina itself. Expressing his profound distrust of the North and the federal government, he stated, “A mere speck compared with several other States in the Union, her reliance for the protection of her rights and her full and equal influence in Federal legislation must be upon the genius of her statesmen and the character of her people.” If the little state produced “a noble race of men...she will make up in moral power what she wants in votes. Public education...unit[es] us among ourselves, and render[s] us terrible abroad.” Ironically foretelling the near future, he exclaimed, “I am anxious to see my beloved Carolina pre-eminently distinguished for the learning, eloquence, and patriotism of her sons. Let us endeavor to make her in general intelligence what she is in dignity and independence of character – the brightest star in the American constellation.” Through the South Carolina doctrines of slavery and states’ rights which the young Southern male elite inculcated at SCC under Thornwell, the state was united and conspicuous within the Union for secession and the initiation of a bloody civil war that continues to haunt the state’s legacy (see chapter six).⁶⁷

C. William Campbell Preston

Preston, also an SCC alumnus, graduated in 1812. Although he held the position of professor and president for five years, a shorter duration than the other three, he also wielded wide influence over the college in additional capacities. Preston served several

⁶⁶ Thornwell, *Dr. J.H. Thornwell’s Letter to Governor Manning on Public Instruction in South Carolina*, originally published in November, 1853 (Charleston, SC: The News and Courier Book Presses, 1885), 27, 35-36, 49.

⁶⁷ Thornwell, *Letter to Governor Manning on Public Instruction*, 27, 35-36, 49.

terms as SCC trustee – 1822-1825, 1829-1833, 1842-1845, and 1851-1857. In between trustee terms, he served two terms as a United States senator in Washington and held the positions of professor and president of the college. A dynamic opponent of the tariff and a firm supporter of states' rights in the 1820s and early 1830s, Preston's dynamic State House speeches ignited many SCC students' minds, such as Thornwell and his class of 1831 (see chapter six.) In January, 1846, the former South Carolina senator took up his duties as Professor of Belles Lettres and Criticism and as college president. His wide popularity made him the obvious choice of the trustees for the positions; he "was, by the acclamation of the State, elected to the presidency," Columbia contemporary Benjamin Palmer later recounted.⁶⁸

Other contemporaries and historians believed that Preston's presidency was the zenith of the antebellum college. Edwin Green called Preston's tenure "[t]he most brilliant period in the history of the old South Carolina College." Attendance in 1849 soared to 237 students, "the largest in antebellum days." Due to Preston's political background, his student James Rion attested in 1860, "His inauguration as President was accompanied by a large accession to the number of students, who flocked to the College from all parts of the South." As a further result of Preston's popularity, two new dormitories, named Harper and Legaré, were built, doubling the number of residence halls on the campus. "In fact after the construction of two new buildings, three houses had to be rented outside the Campus" as well, Rion recalled. The students were suitably impressed when the eminent Daniel Webster lodged with his former fellow senator Preston at the President's House at the college in 1846. While visiting Yale, Thornwell

⁶⁸ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 444; Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 270; Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 161-162; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 82-83; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 144, 296, 304-306, 527.

strongly praised his colleague in his characteristically enthusiastic manner: “I have listened for hours, sir, to the gifted Preston, and have forgotten, under his eloquence, that there was such a thing as time. He ruled, like a wizard, the world of the heart; and we point to him with pride, as one of the jewels of our beloved institution.” Expressing his personal political persuasion, Thornwell shared his opinion that if Preston and the states’ rights governor George McDuffie had been the college’s only produce, the institution would have been worth all the effort and money expended on it.⁶⁹

In addition to his eight years as a senator in Washington, Preston was widely known as one of the most celebrated orators of his day, a skill he employed in captivating his students. The classical works SCC professors selected “focused on oratory and the persuasion of one’s peers,” matters of “state,” and formation of “character,” historian Wayne K. Durrill argues. This training “proved crucial to producing a political consensus among powerful men and their interests in antebellum South Carolina.” Preston’s training of students in speaking and debating skills, therefore, directly increased their future political prowess and ability to convince others of the viability of Southern rights.⁷⁰

One student, William J. Rivers, remembered Preston’s instruction during his college days; during his tenure SCC “directed special attention to rhetoric, and the study of the classics. Its excellence in these branches equaled, I may venture to say, that at any college in the country.” Fellow faculty member LaBorde wrote that Preston “brought to the Chair...rich fruits of a large experience in professional and political life, a varied knowledge, [and] a refined and cultivated intellect.” LaBorde added that Preston had a

⁶⁹ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 51; James Rion to William Courtenay, Winnsboro, March 29, 1883, James Rion Papers, SCL; Thornwell, “Speech at Yale College Alumni Dinner, 1852,” in *Life and Letters*, 367.

⁷⁰ Durrill, “The Power of Ancient Words,” 472, 475.

way with students: he taught “with glowing enthusiasm,” expounding on passages of classic literature to the “admiration” and “inspiration” of his hearers. In South Carolina, Preston’s “curious felicity of expression” characterized by “vivacity” and “elegance,” was so distinguished among its citizens that it was termed “*Prestonian*.” Preston’s student James Rion, a veritable Preston admiration society, remembered that his professor was noted for his “commanding person[,] well modulated...voice, natural grace of manner and personal carriage.” Rion named several of Preston’s published speeches, showing that he – and probably his cohort – read and valued speeches from the senator’s political career, including those on slavery.⁷¹

According to Rion, Preston’s “excellence as a Professor” in turn, “inspired the students with *respect*” for him in his capacity as president. Unlike trustees or fellow faculty, Rion declared, only students could judge the true character of a professor. Rion and his class of 1850 deeply revered Preston’s distinguished past, particularly the fact that “celebrities of America, Great Britain, and France” treated him as an equal, his oratorical gifts that “had held listening Senates,” his high status as a South Carolina attorney, and the fact that he had once been considered as a candidate for the vice presidency of the United States. Rion exclaimed that he inspired the students with “the greatest respect and most willing deference.” Preston’s legal background aided him in his presidency: “His training and experience as a lawyer eminently qualified him to administer the laws of the College with...justice...and to persuade and mould to his

⁷¹ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 444; Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 270; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 82-83; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 144, 296, 304-306, 527; Rion, *William C. Preston, LL.D., as President, and Belles-Lettres Professor, of the South Carolina College, An Address Delivered before the Class of 1850, at their Second Quinquennial Meeting, December 1860* (Columbia, SC: Steam-Power Press of R.W. Gibbes, 1861), 5-7.

purposes the young men under his charge.” Preston gained respect for himself and his instruction by guiding the students while preserving their Southern honor.⁷²

Preston’s speech on his 1846 inauguration as college president demonstrated his dedication to the students and his concern for the college’s welfare. The students requested that the speech be published, and it soon appeared in pamphlet form. Enthusiastic about his duties in molding young minds and of being “surrounded by a circle of ingenious youths,” Preston stated that the president-student relationship entailed “grave responsibilities on my part, and the deepest interests of life on yours.” Remembering his college days thirty years earlier, he assured the young men that he had great “sympathies” in their various endeavors. During one of their periodical uproars over the dining hall’s deficiencies, Preston sympathized, “I know and remember in my own experience how the feelings engendered by an enforced and crowded feeding...at length rise into actual disgust and horror.” He pledged the students his best efforts: “I bring...a deep and reverential love for this my Alma Mater – a solemn sense of my duties, and...a love of letters.” Knowing that the young men would soon lead South Carolina, he avowed, “There certainly cannot be a more important or honorable occupation than to instruct the rising generation in the duties to which they may hereafter be called.” Preston emphasized that the students must strive “with ardent and virtuous aspirations to acquit yourselves with honor hereafter.” The former senator’s invocation of honor was typical of a Southern leader’s counsels to the rising generation.⁷³

Although learning was one of Preston’s major objectives for the young men, he also aimed at loftier goals: “Learning is only a means to the great end we have in

⁷² Rion, *William C. Preston*, 8-9.

⁷³ Preston, “Presidents Report, Commons Hall,” n.d., Preston Papers, SCL; Preston, *Address to the Students of the South Carolina College, Jan. 5, 1846* (Columbia: I.C. Morgan’s Letter Press Print, 1846), 5-7.

view...It is...a part of the armour to be worn in the battle field of life for the achievement of honorable and glorious victories.” Little did he know the extent to which the literal battlefield would loom in their future. Having recently lost his only child, a teenage daughter, Preston spoke to the young men in fatherly terms: “My government, I hope will be animated by the vigilance and tempered by the affection of a parent.” If the young men acquitted themselves well, “my bosom will swell with a parent’s pride, and my vanity will be gratified if your proficiency authorizes me to believe that when the State shall hereafter point to its jewels, I may say I helped to fashion them.” Preston certainly influenced hundreds of the state’s future leaders, who would drive the state to secession, encourage it during the Civil War, and lead it back toward a semblance of its antebellum ways during the Redeemer period. He also promised to be a friend to the students, hoping “that both our official and social relations, may be such, that...you will remember the College with affection...and meet me, when the chances of life throw us together, not without emotion.”⁷⁴

The future proved this hope a reality. During his tenure, Preston greatly enjoyed associating with the college boys. “It has been a pleasure to be associated with such young gentlemen – both personally and officially,” he wrote in a trustees’ report. To his schoolmate Waddy Thompson, he wrote in 1848, “I...am getting on swimmingly with the college, which never was in a better condition...I cannot imagine a more agreeable way of life.” Fatigued by his eight years in Washington, Preston felt a great content to be at home in Columbia again. Life at SCC was “quiet – in some sort literary – and I have a

⁷⁴ Preston, *Address to the Students of the South Carolina College*, 7, 10-11; Preston, Trustees Report, n.d. [c. 1846-1851], Preston Papers, SCL.

feeling of being useful to the State.” Preston’s ministrations at SCC certainly influenced the course of state history.⁷⁵

Preston succeeded in his desire to establish a fatherly relationship with the boys under his care. His student James Rion later attested in 1860, “He made the troubles and trials of ‘his boys’ in a measure his own; he was ever ready to assist or advise those in distress.” A skilled manager of students who were obsessed with their honor, Preston had the ability to give “the severest reproof in such a manner as to inflict no wound,” Rion remembered. Providing needed social opportunities for the young people, “his fireside and table had always a welcome for the student; in holidays those, whose homes were not accessible, could find one at the Presidential mansion...the College was one great family, of which Mr. Preston was the patriarch.” Student Giles Patterson mentioned Preston’s hospitality in his journal. On December 24, 1846, he wrote, “Col. Preston has given an invitation to the College to come over and take some refreshments tomorrow at 11:00. I guess I’ll be there.” Social events at the President’s House, in addition to increasing student affection for Preston, would also provide additional opportunities for him to share his ideas.⁷⁶

Like Thornwell, Preston either funded or found alternate means for bright young men without funds to attend SCC. He complained of the problem in a trustees’ report: “Our Institution is peculiarly destitute of the means of fostering and sustaining [poor] persons in that condition.” The president lamented that “boys of limited means who

⁷⁵ Preston, Trustees Report, n.d. [c. 1846-1851]; and Preston to Waddy Thompson, Mar. 23, 1848, Preston Papers, SCL.

⁷⁶ Rion, *William C. Preston*, 11-12; Giles J. Patterson, *Journal of a Southern Student, 1846-48* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1944), 43. In his 1883 letter to William Courtenay, Rion explained that the “Colonel” sometimes affixed to Preston’s name derived from his once having served as an aide-de-camp to South Carolina governor Richard I. Manning.

indicate superior talent and a desire [for] instruction are frequently presented to us,” but turned down for assistance by the trustees. These young men’s disappointment often resulted “[in] the private charity of” one of the professors, which “enabled them to pass through College.” In a November 1851 report, the president included “suggestions for the helping of poor students who wish to make their own way.” Preston personally aided these young men through college. Edwin Green wrote in 1916, “He does not mention the help he himself gave; but we know that he gave at least one student board at his own table. The late Judge Joshua H. Hudson,” later prominent in Carolina’s Redeemer politics, ‘said he expected to cook his meals if he had not been taken into the house of the President, William C. Preston.’” As a result of Preston’s assistance, Hudson “was first honor man of his class” in 1852. Based on Preston’s strong sympathy for the plight of Europe’s poor (see chapter four), it is characteristic that he sponsored financially challenged students.⁷⁷

Hudson, who would later fight on the Confederate side at Appomattox, reminisced about his benefactor Preston at the 1905 Centennial Celebration of SCC’s opening: “I was then an inmate of Colonel Preston’s home and was classmate and roommate of Samuel W. Melton, the [college] bell-ringer.” Melton later figured prominently in state politics during the Civil War. Hudson explained that, in 1851, a student removed the bell from the chapel cupola. The young men insisted that they would not attend class unless the official bell-ringer rang the bell. A few professors and trustees discussed possible solutions to the situation in Preston’s library. When Hudson walked in, the president asked his protégé if he had any ideas. Hudson suggested that a temporary

⁷⁷ Preston, Trustees Report, n.d. [c. 1846-1851], and November 1851, Preston Papers, SCL; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 56, 241.

bell be placed in the cupola for Melton to ring the next morning. Listening to the student's advice, Preston implemented the suggestions and solved the problem. The college president acted untraditionally by consulting students on important college matters, former student Rion later explained. Preston, however, "did not hesitate to consult students, concerning matters wherein he knew they were necessarily qualified to judge and advise." This policy increased their respect for the SCC president.⁷⁸

Former student James Rion named his first son Preston in his professor's honor. Returning this regard, Preston wrote an autobiographical account of his European sojourn for his namesake in 1860, and the manuscript remained in the Rion family for many years. In a speech in Preston's honor at his ten-year class reunion in 1860, Rion praised Preston's skill as an instructor of both ancient and modern literature, clearly impressed by his European experience. "In his youth, while traveling over Europe, it was his good fortune to be thrown in contact with...the principal literary notables of the day." Rather than discussing boring grammatical details of a piece, Rion recalled, "Mr. Preston would be serving up a banquet of intellectual and aesthetic delights." When teaching Shakespeare, for instance, Preston read the different parts with an actor's skill. Rion attested that his fellow alumni who had "witnessed his renderings of Hamlet's soliloquy,

⁷⁸ J.H. Hudson, "Centennial Oration: Euphradian Society," in *The Centennial Celebration of South Carolina College* (Columbia, SC: The State Co., 1905), 105-106. Green, Preston Biographical Manuscript, c. 1940, Green Papers, SCL, 179. Preston showed patience with his students, even when they were a bit cheeky. "On one occasion [in class] a student undertook to recite a speech of McWillie, who was once opposed in politics to Preston," Edwin Green wrote. The professor paid "close attention, while the class expected that the speaker would receive a sound berating for his temerity." Contrarily, however, "Preston stepped down, put his arm around the boy and told him that he had not thought of that speech for many years, and to come up to his home after the class and talk it over with him."

the dagger scene in Macbeth, and of passages from Othello” could back his testimony. Preston’s talents made the concepts he taught more memorable.⁷⁹

Rion attested to Preston’s essentially Southern personality: “He had Southern youth to rule; his being reared in Virginia, an alumnus of our own College, and for years a citizen of our State, gave him such an insight into the character and temper of Southern youth, that he was able to pursue that nice line of discipline necessary to restrain, while it did not provoke, the high strung youth under his charge.” The former student continued, “He wore the honors of his high position gracefully; he thoroughly knew and sympathized with his subjects; he had great firmness and decision of character.” He respected the students’ Southern honor, something exceedingly dear to their hearts. “Himself a polished gentleman, he treated the students as such...To graduate *gentlemen* was his declared aim.” Preston certainly influenced SCC students to be Southern gentlemen who espoused Southern principles and defended its honor to the death during the Civil War. Rion ended by saying, “Sustained by a brilliant corps of Professors...his regime will long remain without a parallel in the annals of the College.” He exclaimed to his class: “Ours was the good fortune to matriculate and graduate under such a President.”⁸⁰

When prominent attorney Leroy Youmans, class of 1852, attended the SCC Alumni meeting in 1880, he spoke warmly of his former professor Preston. Youmans called him the “first of living orators, whose unstudied talks to his classes were worth more than what was in the text books.” Attesting to the former senator and professor’s

⁷⁹ The fact that Preston was Rion’s eldest son is attested in R.B. Hanahan’s “Colonel James H. Rion of Winnsboro, S.C.,” death account registered at Fairfield Co., SC Court House, Winnsboro, SC, Dec. 22, 1886, Rion Papers, SCL. Rion attested to ownership of the autobiography in a letter to William A. Courtenay, March 29, 1883, Rion Papers, SCL; Rion, *William C. Preston*, 3-5, 7-8.

⁸⁰ Rion, *William C. Preston*, 10-12.

value even as he advanced in age, and his prominent place in state history, Youmans said, “Preston, even in his decline, [was] ‘an awful and majestic ruin,’ not to be contemplated by any South Carolinian of sense and feeling without emotions resembling those which are excited by the remains of the Parthenon and the Coliseum.” The former student considered Preston and his legacy of ideas to be a lasting part of South Carolina’s cultural and political framework.⁸¹

Health issues forced Preston to resign in 1851, but he continued to influence the greenhouse that turned elite boys into Southern leaders, resuming his old position on the Board of Trustees. LaBorde’s college history recorded that Preston faithfully attended meetings and, “as far as his health would permit,” was “an active participant in its labors” until illness forced him to retire from the Board in December, 1857. Between 1858 and his death in 1860, he continued to visit the college, remaining a popular and influential figure. The *History of the Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies* mentions Preston’s mentoring of SCC students. In 1842, excited because the famous senator had just returned to Columbia, the members of the Euphradian Society invited Preston “to attend the meetings of the society and participate in its discussions,” to which he happily agreed. The next year, the society named him annual orator. “Mr. Preston always took a lively interest in the proceedings of the society and even in his last years, decrepit and paralyzed,” the author of the societies’ history, John Marion, wrote, “he hobbled up the steps of the society hall to attend the meetings.” Just before Preston died, LaBorde remarked, “The cordial greeting which he always receives from the students upon his occasional visits to the halls at times of public exercises, but attest the impression of

⁸¹ Leroy F. Youmans, *Address delivered in the hall of the House of Representatives before the alumni of South Carolina College, December 6th, 1881* (Columbia: Printed at the Presbyterian Publishing House, 1882), 36.

which he has left behind him, and the admiration of his genius and services.” Preston’s ideological concepts continued through his students as they fomented secession, fought the Civil War, and steered the state through the Redeemer period.⁸²

D. Francis Lieber

Like Preston, Lieber was already a respected intellectual when he joined the SCC faculty as professor of History and Political Economy in 1835. Of the four professors, Lieber was the best known outside of the South; his works received great acclaim in the North and Europe. SCC chronicler LaBorde asserted the place of Lieber’s writings in American scholarship. As editor of the 1832 *Encyclopedia Americana*, who also wrote some of the articles himself, he “has contributed more to the diffusion of general knowledge among us than any book which was ever issued from the American press,” LaBorde attested. While professor at SCC, Lieber authored and published his most influential works, such as *The Manual of Political Ethics*, the *Essay on Property and Labor*, and his master work, *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government*. “His works have been translated into several of the languages of Europe, and adopted as text-books in many of the highest Colleges and Universities,” LaBorde wrote. “Known as he is throughout this country, he is one of the few American citizens who have an enviable European reputation.” Lieber received the honorary degree of LL.D from Harvard. In addition to the North, South Carolina greatly respected Lieber’s work. He exulted to his wife Matilda in 1854, “Chancellor Dunkin told me the other day that the Judges and the Court of Appeals had put my Liberty [*Civil Liberty and Self-Government*] on the list of

⁸² John Hardin Marion, ed., *History of the Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies* (Columbia, SC: Epworth Orphanage Press, 1931), 40; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 307-308.

books which an applicant for the S.C. Bar must have studied and on which therefore he is examined.”⁸³

Colyer Meriwether judged that Lieber “probably gave more advanced courses [at SCC] than were given at the time in the large, wealthy institutions of the North.” The German-American instructed the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes in the histories of Greece, Rome, France, Germany, and England, in addition to instructing seniors on political economy. Valuing modern history as well as ancient and medieval, he explained in a trustees’ report, “I have continued Roman history to the Junior class, and endeavored to draw parallels in modern history and politics.”⁸⁴

Soon after his arrival in 1835 in a letter to the Euphradian Society, Lieber conveyed his desire for a congenial working relationship with his students: “Wherever the student sees in his teacher a real friend it will be both to the moral and the intellectual development of the former. It is in this relation – that of friendship – that I am anxious to stand with all the students.” In return, Lieber received his students’ affection and respect. The professor wrote in 1837, “The students behave perfectly well. Not once have I yet appealed to their honor and found myself disappointed.” Rather than conducting recitations during every class period, the usual method during the era, Lieber frequently lectured instead. In 1835, he stated that he “dictated to the Class a table of the most important historical events from the beginning of history to the year 1832.” In his senior Political Economy course, he taught current events from newspaper clippings, extremely

⁸³ LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 189, 423-425; Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Saturday at 12 o’clock, 1854, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁸⁴ Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 176.

innovative at the time. This gave him the perfect opportunity to impart his own political beliefs on the questions of the day to his students.⁸⁵

Of Lieber's teaching, LaBorde stated from his personal experience, "To his classes he *poured* out his learning in one continuous stream" with "enthusiasm" and "the greatest earnestness of purpose." The professor proved willing to impart information both during and outside class, which the young men greatly appreciated. Respecting Lieber's diverse scope of knowledge, students regularly conferred with him before their "many public exercises...such as speeches at the Exhibition, at Commencement, before the Societies, and Prize Essays." Lieber, then, "would suggest the plan of discussion, and point to the best sources of information." The students also appreciated and perused "[h]is lectures and his published works...from which the richest treasures were drawn." Besides providing his own books, Lieber also influenced which other tomes the students read. In 1840, he and Thornwell chose many of the volumes for the new South Caroliniana Library. Due to their thoughtful selection, LaBorde explained, "the collection is said to be more valuable than many twice its size." They were careful to include books that directed the students' cultural and political ideas (see chapter six.)⁸⁶

Lieber's friend, M.R. Thayer, later described Lieber's classroom kingdom. Instead of reading his lectures, not uncommon at the time, he spoke extemporaneously, using "terse, familiar language" as well as "copious and happy illustrations," and his pupils "thoroughly understood everything they learned." Lieber actively involved

⁸⁵ Marion, *History of the Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies*, 40; Lieber, Diary, Feb. 28, 1837, in *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber*, Thomas Sargent Perry, ed. (Boston: J.R. Osgood & Co., 1882), 115; Lieber, "Dr. Lieber's Report to the Chairmen of the Faculty," Nov. 24, 1835, Lieber Papers, SCL; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 430.

⁸⁶ LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 425-431; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 278.

students by giving them blackboard assignments. For example, “to one he would give chronology, to another geography, to another names, to another battles.” In a letter to his niece Clara, Lieber wrote, “I have very much developed the element of the Blackboard in teaching. I have 7 or 8 huge Blackboards in my lecture room and would no more be without them than the astronomer or machinist [would be without their] diagram.” At times, a blackboard would hold “sixty or seventy” terms, each accompanied “with a word or two showing that the writer knew what they meant,” Thayer explained. Lieber brightened his classroom with “large maps and globes.” Busts lined the walls, including luminaries of ancient and modern days. Requiring students to purchase a “blank book with a firm cover” for note-taking, he also had the students write down “books and subjects to be studied in later life – such as were necessary for an educated man.” Before the students left the classroom, he assigned readings for the next class, including not only “peculiar subjects or persons,” but also “poetry and fiction” of the historical period. The students, preferring these modes of learning to some of the duller methods employed by other professors of the day, would pay better attention and remember Lieber’s instruction longer.⁸⁷

Lieber managed to add humor to his classroom, enhancing camaraderie. In one instance, Meriwether remembered, Lieber made an “offer of three nines (the maximum mark for the semester) to any one of the freshman class who could find his glasses that he had accidentally lost on his way to the classroom.” In a discussion of European history, he once queried, “What is Bologna noted for?” No one ventured an answer, so he said, “For professors and sausages,” to a general chuckle. “Oh, gentlemen, you need not laugh.

⁸⁷ “Biographical Discourse by the Hon. M.R. Thayer,” in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1880), 34-35; Lieber to [his niece] Clara, July 1854, Lieber Papers, SCL.

Wherever dere are professors and sausages, dere you will find students and hogs,” he dryly remarked in his German accent. To encourage student learning, Lieber “recommended the adoption of the prize system,” giving “handsome editions of the classics [to] the best students.” For balance, however, he “required the system to be based on general excellence, so as to prevent a one-sided development.” When required, Lieber sometimes bestowed upon his students “very fatherly advice on matters not at all connected with the regular work,” Meriwether wrote. For example, he kindly took a student aside who tended to blush far too often and explained to him that he needed to conquer the habit in order to fit into society. Lieber aided in SCC’s mission to not only produce intelligent, learned men, but also men who were fitted to shine in their Southern culture.⁸⁸

Lieber mentioned his great affection for his students in several of his writings, such as in his 1848 address to the Euphradian Society. The society had named him an honorary member and planned to commission a portrait of him for their meeting room, demonstrating their respect for his ideas. The professor declared that “the highest capacity in the pursuit of knowledge” existed when “the intellect of both [professor and pupil] is...strengthened, widened, lifted and refined by mutual esteem, virtuous affection and generous attachment.” With characteristic immodesty, he hoped that their friendship resembled that of Socrates and his students, as well as Jesus and the disciples.⁸⁹

Like Thomas Cooper years earlier, Lieber dedicated his magnum opus, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853), to his pupils. “Through you my life and name are

⁸⁸ Frank Friedel, *Francis Lieber: Nineteenth-Century Liberal* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968; originally published by Louisiana State University, 1947), 139; Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 176.

⁸⁹ Lieber, “To a Committee of the Euphradian Society,” Nov. 22, 1848, Lieber Papers, SCL.

linked to the Republic, and it seems natural that I should dedicate to you a work intended to complete that part of my Political Ethics which touches more especially on liberty,” he wrote. “You will take it as the gift of a friend, and will allow it kindly to remind you of that room where you were accustomed to sit before your teacher with the busts of Washington, Socrates, Shakespeare, and other labourers in the vineyard of humanity, looking down upon us.” He conveniently omitted mentioning the busts of Southern leaders who were also in his lecture room. Although the dining hall served dreadful food and was known as a topic of student revolt, Lieber noted in a trustees’ report in 1842 that “the month during which I had to be present at the meals of the students passed as pleasantly as I could possibly desire.” The fact that Lieber stood in the role of mentor and friend to the students made him all the more crucial to their ideological formation.⁹⁰

Testimony supports the fact that Lieber’s students returned his friendship. In 1848, Lieber wrote to Samuel Gridley Howe about his students’ sensitivity on an occasion when he was in an emotional state. “The other day, when the German news [of revolution] had arrived, I was obliged to lecture,” he wrote. “I began, - but I could not. I said, ‘My young friends, I am unfit for you this afternoon. News has arrived that Germany too is rising, and my heart is full to overflowing. I,’ – but I felt choked. I pointed toward the door.” Just before the young men left, they “gave a hearty cheer for ‘Old Germany’” to encourage their Prussian professor.⁹¹

Roses were Lieber’s favorite flower. In a letter to George Ticknor’s wife in 1853, he mentioned that a student kept him well-supplied with them, and he kept them on his desk. “I have always flowers on my writing-table, and if not flowers, for instance in

⁹⁰ Lieber, *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, & Co., 1853), Dedication; Lieber, Report to the Board of Trustees, May 1, 1842, Lieber Papers, SCL.

⁹¹ Lieber to Samuel Gridley Howe, Apr. 8, 1848, in *Life and Letters*, 213-214.

winter, at least a green branch; and of late a student, a fine lad...having seen this, has repeatedly sent me roses. This is very refreshing,” Lieber remarked. In a letter to Hillard in 1854, he wrote, “I have never been more beloved by the students than now. They seem to think I am something and feel toward me as friends.” Giving testimony to his past and present students’ reliance on his political opinions, Lieber wrote Hillard: “A former student in Texas lately desired my views on Know-Nothings. I dare say my letter will be printed.”⁹²

Lieber’s students reminisced in later life about the enjoyable times they had in his classroom. Many students preserved their detailed notes of his lectures, and one student, Giles Patterson, left notebooks and journal entries praising Lieber. Another, Judge Charles H. Simonton, class of 1849, fondly remembered Lieber’s teaching. “I recall more of the occurrences in his lecture room, his wise sayings, his profound discussions of political economy, than I do the instructions of any other professor,” he said in 1901 at the SCC centennial celebration. What Simonton learned in Lieber’s class had influenced him for the past fifty years. “When we were sophomores Dr. Lieber took a new departure. He said while we were studying the history of the past we [should] also study...current history.” The professor “set aside one recitation in each month to be devoted to an examination upon the newspapers of the past month.” Simonton reminisced, “I recall well the first recitation on newspapers. He called some ten of us up, arranged us on the front bench and gave each one a subject. He then called up a son of Mr. John C. Calhoun, and said Mr. Calhoun, give me the history of the world during the last month, and I give you

⁹² Lieber to Mrs. George Ticknor, Apr. 17, 1853, *Life and Letters*, 258; Lieber to George Hillard, Feb. 1854, Lieber Papers, HEH.

five minutes.” Simonton reminisced, “You can imagine...the astonishment with which we all heard directions to handle so large a subject in so short a time.”⁹³

In the 1880s, former Confederate colonel C.C. Jones recorded a flattering account about his professor of forty years earlier. “To my apprehension never was instructor more painstaking, luminous, or able. It was a genuine privilege to sit upon his benches,” Jones recalled. Rather than relying on a textbook, Lieber pulled “[t]reasures of expansion, illustration, and philosophical deduction...from his great storehouses of knowledge and reflection. His classes were always full. He claimed and received the closest attention.” Not only was Lieber a superior teacher, Jones opined, but also a friendly one: “The relation between teacher and pupil was maintained at a high standard, and he evinced, on all occasions, a special pleasure in enkindling a desire for exact and liberal knowledge.” Jones could not say enough on Lieber’s behalf: “In my eyes he was a wonderful instructor. I delighted to sit under his teachings, and I have never ceased to remember with gratitude [his] suggestions...knowledge, and...encouragement.” Lieber had permanently altered the worldviews of Jones and his class of 1849.⁹⁴

In 1905, alumnus J.H. Hudson remembered Lieber’s encouragement of another student. Hudson recalled that, in 1852, Samuel Melton had delivered a fine oration on Washington’s Birthday in the chapel. “So pleased was the great Dr. Lieber with the address of Melton that he invited him to his private study, and, after congratulating him warmly, presented him with a handsome gold pen.” Hudson explained the significance: “This was, indeed, a compliment from so great a man and scholar, and a man never given

⁹³ Giles Patterson, “1846-1847 Journal,” Giles Patterson Papers, SCL; Howard H. Caldwell, “Collegiate Romance,” quoted in Yates Snowden, “In the Days before the War,” and C.H. Simonton, “The Alumni at Dinner” in *The Centennial Celebration of South Carolina College*, 1901, 44-46, 79-80.

⁹⁴ C.C. Jones in Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 177-178.

to flattery.” This early encouragement bolstered Melton’s confidence; he later served South Carolina as Circuit Judge and Attorney General.⁹⁵

When Lieber expressed his hope in 1855 that the Board of Trustees would select him as SCC’s next president, his students, both past and present, pledged their assistance and support. Several former students, now employed as editors, praised Lieber’s abilities in their newspapers. In a letter to his confidante George Hillard, Lieber exulted, “All the alumni insist on my election.” He continued, “[I]t has come to pass that [almost] every upcountry paper...has nominated me with a heartiness and zeal of which I had no idea, and which is not in all cases even very discreet.” If their later personal flowery comments are any comparison, these editorials, though likely heartfelt, were most likely “indiscreet” indeed. He added proudly, “Some of the editors are my former pupils...and they send me letters accompanying their papers, signing themselves as ‘admirers and supporters.’” Lieber’s students obviously felt him to be in line with southern ideas or they would not have considered him fit to govern the institution that took unfinished elite boys and turned out the next generation of Southern men.⁹⁶

When the Board gave the presidency to another professor less qualified than Lieber in 1856, Lieber felt insulted and resigned his professorship. Numerous students, as well as friends and acquaintances, sent sympathy notes with expressions of disappointment at losing him; Meriwether remarked that “resolutions of regret [were] conveyed to him by some of the most prominent men in the State, indicating the fact that Lieber was, indeed, a member of the Southern elite.” His present students placed a notice in a newspaper, reporting that they had “unanimously adopted” that Lieber’s resignation

⁹⁵ Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 175, 178; J.H. Hudson, “Centennial Oration: Euphradian Society,” in *The Centennial Celebration of South Carolina College*, 109.

⁹⁶ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Jan. 4, 1855, and Dec. 1855, Lieber Papers, HEH.

would be a tremendous loss to the college and the region. They further requested that the trustees ask Lieber to reconsider and retract his resignation. The paper printed Lieber's reply alongside the resolutions. "It is grateful to my heart to know that those who think they have derived some benefit from my teaching, feel also an affectionate regard for me." After these events transpired, Hollis notes, "[T]he students, especially those who admired Francis Lieber, grew more restless and turbulent by the week." The riot of 1856 that Thornwell quelled came not long after Lieber's departure.⁹⁷

III. Interrelations of Four Great Minds

These four luminaries certainly interacted with each other a great deal during long tenures at the college and years as members of the Columbia elite. Close friendships occurred in some cases, particularly Cooper and Lieber's friendships with Preston. In other cases, animosity arose, such as the distaste Lieber and Thornwell evinced for each other. Whether friend or foe, however, social and political collaboration stood as a necessary component of their lives.

Cooper and Preston, laborers together in the tariff and nullification opposition, remained on friendly terms throughout their lives. Leading fiery political meetings in 1827 and 1828 in Columbia, the two also founded the anti-tariff committee. They co-signed, along with fellow SCC professor Robert Henry and member of the wealthy elite David McCord, the "Woollen's Bill" petition, which called Carolinians to protect their rights against what Cooper and his political colleagues viewed as the overweening federal government; the petition swept through the state like wildfire. When the legislature tried Cooper in 1832, Preston faithfully supported him and, as a trustee, voted in his favor. As

⁹⁷ "South Carolina College," *American Publishers' Circular and Literary Gazette* (1855-1862); Feb. 2, 1856, 2, 5; *American Periodicals*, 64; Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 183; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 125.

a United States Senator, Preston also “introduced legislation” for the recovery of the \$400 wrongfully levied on Cooper when he was previously charged with violation of the unconstitutional Alien and Sedition Acts. While Preston was in the Senate, Cooper sent his old colleague at least three friendly notes asking for his help in their mutual struggle for South Carolina’s political status quo. He feared that a war with the British would occur, placing the South in an untenable position. With perspicacity, he wrote, “[W]hen the war is over, the drained and impoverished South will be feeble, helpless, and prostrate at the feet of Administration.” These letters indicate that Cooper continued his interest in South Carolina politics and his states’ rights opinions to the last. In a letter to the senator in 1837, Cooper warned him, “The division of opinion [between] slave states paralyzes us... We are ready and willing to...cut the knot if needful, and quickly too. We think we can depend on being followed by Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. If so, I w[oul]d cut cables and steer away.” In a letter to Preston a year before his death, Cooper confided, “I almost hope for a separation, for the manifold corruptions of this government, will go on from bad to worse, & the people will be bribed or frightened out of resistance.”⁹⁸

Preston, who lived twenty years after Cooper’s death, continued to remember his friend. In letters of introduction given to Cooper’s son Priestly, Preston referred to “our venerable old friend Dr Cooper” as well as his “very old friend Dr Thomas Cooper whose wide reputation for learning and science you are doubtless acquainted with.” Cooper’s granddaughter wrote many years later, “I judge from some letters of my fathers, that W. Preston was a great friend of Dr Cooper.” She copied a few lines Preston wrote about

⁹⁸ Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 110, 118; Cooper to Preston, Columbia, Jan. 25, 1836, Cooper Papers, SCL; Cooper to Preston, April 9, 1835 and March 26, 1838, Preston Family Papers, VHS; Cooper to Preston, Dec. 31, 1837, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, HEH.

Cooper in 1855. In them, Preston described Cooper as “replete with all sorts of knowledge, a living encyclopedia,” as “joyous with a kindly disposition,” and as having “mental faculties” so “vigorous” that, at age eighty, he “amused his leisure by translating Spanish ballads for [a] literary periodical” in addition to “the compilation of [South Carolina’s] statutes.” Preston was impressed with the older man’s continued intellectual agility at an age when most persons would have retired.⁹⁹

Although Thomas Cooper lived for only four years after Lieber moved to Columbia, they became friends “personally and intellectually” according to historian Kenneth Platte. Little information remains concerning their friendship, but, on one occasion, Cooper mentioned in a letter to a South Carolina Representative, “I have delivered your message to Lieber [sic].” It seems that Cooper and Lieber had discussed the political scene and this specific representative. Cooper also, in another letter, recorded satisfaction that “Joel Poinsett has appointed Lieber [sic] an examiner at West Point.”¹⁰⁰

Thornwell studied under Cooper at SCC from 1829-1831. During these two years, Thornwell developed a particular respect for Cooper. He reported to William Robbins, his benefactor, that, during his entrance exam, “Dr. Cooper appeared to be well-pleased.” If Cooper had been his only examiner, Thornwell continued, he “should have been successful throughout.” (Thornwell failed his first exam but gained admittance as a junior after his second attempt.) In a later letter, written after Thornwell was a well-established student at SCC, Robbins referred to Cooper as “an idol of yours.” When the trustees

⁹⁹ L.C. Welch to Meriwether, Mt. Pleasant, SC, March 21, 1899, Colyer Meriwether Papers, SCL; Preston to Bernard H. Bee, May 11, 1839, and Preston to B.T. Archer, May 11, 1839, Cooper Papers, SCL.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Mack and Henry Lesesne, eds., *Francis Lieber and the Culture of the Mind* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 35; Cooper to Francis Elmore, May 3, 1838, Cooper Papers, SCL.

accused Cooper of corrupting the students' religious beliefs, Thornwell testified in his defense.¹⁰¹

In later years, Thornwell, a dedicated Presbyterian, came to lose respect for Cooper's Deist beliefs, but apparently held his other opinions in high esteem. Similarities between Cooper and Thornwell's proslavery thought and writings are striking; Cooper's proslavery argument greatly influenced Thornwell (see chapters two and three.) O'Brien mentions the similarity of Thornwell's writing style to that of his "idol," Cooper. The former pupil wrote "with a free, relaxed curiosity reminiscent of Cooper" and demonstrated "a free vigor and sarcastic bluntness that was very much Cooper's style."¹⁰²

Francis Lieber despised James Thornwell. This is quite evident from the peevish remarks in letters to his patient Northern confidant, George Hillard. All the details are not known, but it appears that Lieber's liberal religious beliefs and Thornwell's strong Presbyterianism, in addition to Lieber's bitterness at receiving less admiration at SCC than Thornwell, made them enemies. In one missive to Hillard, Lieber, in the throes of writing one of his numerous essays, wanted a scholarly opinion. "There is, in Columbia, but one man [the brilliant scholar Thornwell] who would be capable of giving me some advice, but his mind and soul are so Calvinized, that anything like an intercourse between us has long ceased...It is one of the bitterest things in my life." On Thornwell's election to the presidency in 1852, Lieber pouted to his old friend Dorothea Dix, "Mr. Preston has

¹⁰¹ Thornwell to William Robbins, Columbia, December 18, 1829, in *Life and Letters*, 55; Robbins to Thornwell, March 29, 1831, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 94, 114.

¹⁰² O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 1020.

resigned and Mr. Thornwell has been made president and – I feel somewhat like a man walking about in the catacombs.”¹⁰³

It appears that Thornwell was annoyed by Lieber as well. In an 1849 trustees’ report, Thornwell charged Lieber with high-handed behavior. Lieber, who was president *pro tempore* during an illness of Preston, sent Thornwell a message through a student that countermanded Thornwell’s scheduling of a commencement activity. The message stated that “he had appointed the time for the senior speaking to begin – that his order must be adhered to – that he was President and the matter belonged exclusively to him. The message appeared to me very insulting – and I became very indignant,” Thornwell informed the trustees. “The idea that an order should be sent to me by a student – which implied, moreover, that I had meddled with business that did not belong to me – was beyond endurance.” The student later said he had included by mistake that which was not intended for Thornwell; however, Lieber had still expressed his true feelings toward his antagonist.¹⁰⁴

Later, when Lieber did not receive the SCC presidency he coveted, he blamed Thornwell, probably correctly. “But it is very possible indeed that your friend remains simple professor, because the outgoing president[,] a regular hard shell Calvinist, who meanly hates me, simply because I am not a bitter Calvinist[,] has urged another professor, who has been here a year only[,] as a good president,” Lieber ranted to Hillard. “This professor [Charles McCay] is a Presbyterian.” The trustees chose McCay, and Lieber resigned his twenty-one year professorship as a result of his frustration and anger at being passed over for a shockingly inferior candidate. This longtime animosity

¹⁰³ Lieber to Hillard, Dec. 1852, HEH; Lieber to Dorothea Dix, Jan. 12, 1852, HEH, in O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 449.

¹⁰⁴ Thornwell, Trustees’ Report, Mar. 1, 1849, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

between Lieber and Thornwell takes on a more amusing cast when one considers the fact that they and their families lived in the same duplex house now known as Lieber College.¹⁰⁵

Happily, however, Preston served as a contrast to Thornwell in Lieber's life, and he remarked positively on him in his journal and in numerous letters. "Preston I like much. He is a thinking man and a gentleman," Lieber entered in his journal just after meeting him in 1835. He wrote to Sumner, "Mr. Preston...has precisely my views on slavery." (See chapter four for Preston's proslavery views.) They even shared the same fear of abolitionists. Lieber continued, "[S]ays Preston, 'if the Abolitionists go on at this rate, a man like myself, will not be at liberty anymore to speak his mind.'" In 1837, Lieber went to Washington, visited with Preston, and proudly recorded in a letter home that he was sitting in "Mr Prestons chair" in the Senate. Preston and Lieber's long-term friendship and mutual respect is important proof in determining Lieber's status as a member of the Southern elite.¹⁰⁶

Over the years, their friendship deepened. In 1844, he wrote to his wife, Matilda, "Preston is really familiar with me. I always now call him Preston and he me Lieber." He exulted that Preston had sent letters of recommendation to the American Consul at Liverpool, "a distinguished American in Paris," "the minister at Vienna," and a few other notables, "recommending me very cordially and pressingy as one of his best friends." He proudly included passages from Preston's recommendation letter about himself: "One of the most distinguished professors of our College...A gentleman of the highest distinction

¹⁰⁵ Lieber to Hillard, Dec. 1855, Lieber Papers, HEH; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 61.

¹⁰⁶ Lieber, Diary, 1835, in *Life and Letters*, 104-105; Lieber to Sumner, Oct. 27, 1835, and Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Aug. 4, 1837, Lieber Papers, HEH.

in literature and of a social position with us...One of the most learned gentlemen of our country.” On one of Preston’s visits to Richmond, VA, he received a chatty letter from Lieber, bringing him up to date on college news and urging him to return to Columbia soon. In 1854, Lieber discussed the Missouri Compromise, the Nebraska Bill, and other political items from a unionist viewpoint in a letter to Massachusetts resident Hillard. “Yet, Wm Preston is the only man to whom I have expressed my opinion, or could express it.”¹⁰⁷

Preston also spoke highly of his friendship with Lieber. Several letters Preston wrote to his old colleague in his later years form an important part of the analysis of Preston’s proslavery and paternalistic beliefs (see chapter four.) Preston took great interest in Lieber’s success after he left SCC in 1856. “I hope the pitchers are to your taste,” Preston wrote Lieber of the silver pitchers with which the college presented him as a going-away gift. He had heard that Lieber would “probably be put into the Columbia College [now University, New York City.] I hope...that your eminent services may be [of benefit] to the country.”¹⁰⁸

Thornwell and Preston’s relationship is harder to gauge, but it appears that they had a great deal of mutual respect for each other. LaBorde, fellow faculty member, mentioned complimentary statements they made of each other in formal reports, and they certainly shared similar life experiences as well as key social and political beliefs. When Preston’s beloved only child, his daughter Sally, died in her late teenage years, Thornwell sent a long letter of sympathy to his colleague. He pleaded with Preston to turn to God for comfort and assured the bereaved father of his heartfelt and frequent prayers. He

¹⁰⁷ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Feb 21, 1844, and March 2, 1844, HEH; Lieber to Preston, March 1847, Preston Family Papers, VHS; Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Feb. 1854, Lieber Papers, HEH.

¹⁰⁸ Preston to Lieber, Preston Place, April 17, 1857, Preston Papers, SCL.

confessed, “Indeed I was hardly conscious to myself of the strength of my attachment to you, until I saw you go down into the house of mourning.” On the other hand, when Preston invited Thornwell to have dinner with him on one occasion, Thornwell sent an intriguing note of refusal, giving as reason that “my principles are fixed in regard to the expediency of Ministers of the Gospel taking part in entertainments of the kind unless upon extraordinary occasions.” It is not certain what sort of temptation Thornwell feared at Preston’s dinner party, or how the erstwhile host accepted the refusal.¹⁰⁹

Preston respected Thornwell, nonetheless, and deemed him essential to the college. In 1846, as Thornwell contemplated pastoring a church in Baltimore, Preston, the SCC president at the time, told Thornwell’s close friend Benjamin Palmer, “We cannot afford to lose Dr. Thornwell from the College...[H]e has acquired that moral influence over the students, which is superior even to law; and his removal will take away the very buttresses on which the administration of the College rests.” Thornwell wrote to his old friend Gillespie, “Col. Preston is very much opposed to my going [to Baltimore] and has had an interview with some member of the Presbytery and I suspect that he has got them pledged to put an interdict upon it.” Preston carried the day, and Thornwell remained at the college.¹¹⁰

In turn, Thornwell greatly appreciated Preston’s value to the institution. “Col. Preston has given great satisfaction as President and I believe is unusually popular among the students,” he wrote to Gillespie. “He has entered upon the discharge of our duties with a great deal of zeal and enthusiasm and takes immense pains, not only in his immediate department, but in attempting to inspire a general thirst for knowledge and a

¹⁰⁹ Thornwell to Preston, Aug. 6, 1846, and n.d., Preston Papers, VHS.

¹¹⁰ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 290; Thornwell to James Gillespie, Mar. 27, 1846, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

spirit of literary ardor... On many accounts his connection with the Institution must redound greatly to its advantage.” In another letter to a friend, Dr. Breckenridge, in 1849: “Our College is quite flourishing as to numbers. Preston’s name has been a word to conjure with. The institution has risen, as if by magic, under his influence and exertions.” Thornwell feared, however, that “the charm is soon, too soon, to be broken. He has been, for six or eight weeks, in a precarious [physical] condition.” Describing Preston’s illness and his concern that he might die or be reduced to invalidism, Thornwell confided, “If he should be compelled to leave the College, I shall have but little inducement to stay here.” If Preston’s “society was taken from” him, Thornwell explained, he would seriously consider pursuing a different branch of the ministry. Mysteriously, however, Thornwell stated in an 1850 trustees’ report that Preston, whom he had looked up to for years, had gravely offended him in some way. Whether they later reconciled their differences or remained at odds is uncertain.¹¹¹

Except for Lieber and Thornwell’s animosity, the four professors generally enjoyed positive, mutually inspiring working relationships and, in some cases, close friendships. The four members of the Southern intellectual elite evinced remarkably similar worldviews concerning slavery and states’ rights; Preston and Lieber continued to discuss and compare their ideas throughout their lives, whether in person or by letter, and Cooper and Preston stood together as political collaborators during the anti-tariff fight. Sharing similar experiences and the same college, Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, while expressing their own unique personalities, heavily influenced the students they taught in remarkably similar ways.

¹¹¹ Thornwell to R.J. Breckenridge, Feb. 24, 1849, in *Life and Letters*, 330; Thornwell to Gillespie, Mar. 27, 1846, and Thornwell, Faculty Report, Jan. 6, 1850, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

Conclusion

South Carolina College, located in the capital city of Columbia, served as the central antebellum training ground for the state's elite sons. These young men would become the sociopolitical leaders of South Carolina, representing it on both the state and national level. SCC graduates also influenced the entire South, whether at home or from abroad, since the state was the political leader of the Lower South and graduates fanned out into other Southern states, making names for themselves across the region.

Although gifted and influential men graced the college faculty, Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber stood above the others in personal attainments and public influence. In addition, their enthusiastic teaching, coupled with a sincere interest in their students' welfare, boosted their popularity as well as their personal influence with the students. Contemporaries left testimony of the four professors' genius as instructors and their kindness to the rowdy young men in their charge. These unusually strong professor-student relationships created an ideal atmosphere for Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's proslavery and states' rights ideas, skillfully expressed in the classroom and in daily campus life, to take deep root.

These professors imparted their proslavery concepts and pro-Southern ideals with the aim of protecting the multiple features of Carolina's socioeconomic status quo. The convictions of these four gained a direct impetus from their many life-changing experiences as travelers and observers in Britain and the Continent. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber brought their European impressions back across the transatlantic currents. Naturally, other influences affected their proslavery thought as well; their upbringing, their proslavery acquaintances and friends, their encounters with slaves,

literature they read – in short, their experience of living in the South. This dissertation, however, will bring to the fore the remarkable influence that their transatlantic experiences had upon their justification for slavery. Moved by what they witnessed in Europe to advocate slavery and other South Carolina doctrines like state sovereignty and protection of Carolina’s agricultural lifestyle, they, as a result, molded the minds of their SCC students, who in turn altered Southern – and American – history.

CHAPTER TWO

THOMAS COOPER'S CAUTIONARY TALE: HIS ERRANT EXAMPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN V. HIS STERLING REPUBLIC OF SOUTH CAROLINA

More than forty years after Cooper's death, James Howe, a respected Columbia citizen, reminisced about the figure from his youth: "[T]here might have been seen, almost any day, upon the back of a sorry looking donkey in the streets of Columbia, a little old Englishman, who waddled like a duck when he walked upon his short, stubby and deformed legs. He was about four feet and a half high, carried a monstrous big bald head upon his shoulders, and was a marvel to look upon when contemplated either as a stranger or as a familiar." This "little old Englishman" was also remembered for his peculiar contributions. "He it was who first suggested the doctrine that a State possessed the right, under the Constitution, to nullify a law of Congress, or to secede from the Union at pleasure, whenever she might deem it her interest to do either," Howe recollected. "President Cooper was the leading and principal writer on that side, and was an exceedingly hard old nut for any man to deal with on questions of political economy." James Howe painted a vivid picture of Cooper's contribution; however, he did not realize that Cooper's identity as an Englishman and his varied experiences abroad led to the very doctrines he was famous for long after his death: his steadfast support for slavery and his vehement defense of South Carolina's rights.¹¹²

¹¹² James Howe, *The Columbia Register*, Aug. 13, 1881, quoted in Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 290-291.

Introduction

Thomas Cooper, a native of Great Britain, resided there until age thirty-five. The scenes he witnessed in his mother country angered and deeply concerned him, dramatically influencing his future philosophy, specifically on the subjects of slavery and republican government. He disapproved of almost everything about Britain, and its economic and political policies remained his especial dread. For the rest of his life, which he spent in the United States, he repeatedly warned Americans to avoid the pitfalls which, in Cooper's opinion, had destroyed their shared mother country. Cooper's writings frequently decried the deplorable state of the poor in Great Britain, a topic of continuous grief to him. The government and society, he opined, conspired to hold down paupers in their unfortunate circumstances and, in some cases, worsened their impoverished situation. The former Englishman systematically compared his personal observations of British working class misery to the paternalistic master-slave system of South Carolina. Since Cooper believed this socioeconomic arrangement provided permanent care and protection for the Southern working class – in his opinion, the slaves – he came to the conclusion that slavery proved far more advantageous for workers than the free labor system.

Southern ideologues often compared free workers in Britain to enslaved Southern workers, according to Fox-Genovese and Genovese: "That the black slaves of the South fared better than the mass of the world's free workers and peasants became gospel among southern whites of all classes." Fox-Genovese and Genovese provide examples: "In late eighteenth-century Charleston, leading intellectuals...like David Ramsay, who disliked slavery, and Alexander Garden, who defended it, agreed that slaves fared better in South

Carolina than the great mass of laborers did in Europe.” In the early nineteenth century, “Charles Fenton Mercer, a prominent [Virginia] politician...cit[ed] the ghastly conditions of British workers – uneducated, poverty-stricken, and increasingly tempted into crime.” Cooper’s observation of the British poor occurred first in his experience and his observation of Southern slaves afterward, but he nonetheless arrived at the same conclusion as native-born Southerners.¹¹³

Cooper’s visit to France in 1792 further influenced his philosophy. Initially impressed with the ideals of the Revolution, he was quickly disillusioned as he observed firsthand the machinations of Robespierre and the increasing violence of the French working class. Formerly a believer in democracy, he eschewed it for republicanism, a system in which the people’s representatives oversaw the government rather than the people themselves. He further shifted his belief from universal suffrage to a propertied electorate. The rule of elite property owners, such as the system in the South, kept the enslaved in check, discouraging revolts or revolutions.

Cooper also held a low opinion of the British government; in his view, it curtailed personal liberties, supported manufacturing, and straitened the economy. On moving to the United States in 1794, Cooper espoused Jefferson’s classical republican beliefs in direct response to what he had seen and condemned in Britain. Classical republicanism eschewed manufacturing in order to support the independent farmer, who was his own employer and independently grew food for his family, and supported state supremacy to keep what he considered an overweening federal government in proper bounds. It made logical sense to Cooper, then, to support the plantation system – a type of agrarianism that he believed provided food and stability not only for the planter elite, but also for the

¹¹³ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 11-13.

slaves under the master's care. Other classical republicans of the era came to similar conclusions; Drew McCoy points out that "slavery was the linchpin of the agricultural society Jefferson knew best, and during his lifetime the institution was becoming more solidly entrenched in the South instead of withering away in accordance with Revolutionary [era] ideals." Cooper also concluded that the North's growing preference for manufacturing, as evinced through their race to increase the tariff in order to limit the quantity of foreign imports, stemmed from an unfortunate imitation of Britain which, he predicted, would bring misery and ruin not only to the North, but also to the South by destroying not only its agrarian society but also its trade with Britain, necessary to facilitate the kingdom's cotton purchases.¹¹⁴

Citing the oppression of the working class under the British system, he strongly and frequently warned the South and the United States to avoid imitation of British government. His time living in the North reinforced this conviction. Jailed for criticizing Adams under the Alien and Sedition Acts despite the Constitution's guarantee of free speech, Cooper decided that Federalism had much in common with the high-handed British government. At the same time, Cooper's French experiences gave him a decided distaste for democracy and popular majority rule. The Southern government, which he loved and defended, exemplified, for him, the perfect republic. The people elected their own representatives, generally members of the Southern white male elite, to rule for them. Unlike the British government, these representatives kept the enslaved working class fed and clothed, while keeping them in check against powerful revolts such as the French peasantry had led during Cooper's 1792 visit.

¹¹⁴ McCoy, *The Elusive Republic*, 251.

As an influential Southern ideologue, Cooper supported the slave system and the South's right to preserve it through influential speeches and published writings. He wielded significant power over the region as a political agitator in Columbia, the state capital, as an author and speaker appreciated by Southern leaders, and as a professor of South Carolina College (SCC) where he molded the minds of the young male elite. Cooper defended the Southern republic with extraordinary zeal, and he stood equal to Calhoun in his political influence. His agitations shaped and motivated the nullification controversies of 1828 and 1832. The atmosphere of influence he created for his students as a professor for fourteen years is, perhaps, the most significant way Cooper directly affected and altered South Carolina's secession fomentation and, in fact, the Civil War itself. His books, *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826) and *A Manual of Political Economy* (1833), derived from his classroom lectures, in addition to the future proslavery activity and states' rights support of his Southern elite male students, provide a definite portrait of Cooper's mind-altering influence. One author, H.M. Ellis, stated in 1920, "Thomas Cooper, writer, scientist, and political agitator...bears probably the greatest share of individual responsibility for the American Civil War."¹¹⁵

I. Cooper's European Experiences

A. Observations of British Working Class Suffering

Thomas Cooper, born in London in 1759 to an English family of some means, was reared and educated in Britain's capital city. A brilliant young man, he studied at Oxford University, completing his course of study at age eighteen. Oxford did not award Cooper his diploma because he refused to affirm the Thirty-Nine Articles, an outline of

¹¹⁵ H.M. Ellis, "Thomas Cooper – A Survey of His Life, Part 1 – England, 1759-1794," *Southern Atlantic Quarterly*, Jan. 1920, 24.

Protestant doctrines. Nevertheless, he later passed the bar examination and practiced law during the 1780s and early 1790s in Manchester, a major industrial city which provided a painfully clear view of the industrial city dwellers' difficulties. A Manchunian friend of Cooper's, Thomas Walker, commended Cooper's legal aid of the poor and suffering of that city: "He was truly a man whose time and whose labours were ever at the command of the injured and the unfortunate." Cooper traveled around the Manchester area, visited the Amlwck copper mines at Anglesea, and frequently visited London, areas where great poverty existed.¹¹⁶

From 1790 to 1793, he turned his own hand to manufacturing on a small scale which no doubt added to his distaste for the enterprise. In a two-room building, a small staff of employees turned out bleached calico, muslin, and other goods. Unexpectedly, the bleaching process "caused spitting of blood among the employees who handled the bleached cloths." Despite the fact that Cooper and his wife had both invested their own inherited money in the business, and the bleaching service made a constant profit, he shut it down in 1793, deciding to move to America. This experience no doubt left a bad taste in his mouth, which he carried with him over the sea.¹¹⁷

Stuart Hylton, author of *A History of Manchester*, confirms the fact that the poor suffered greatly during Cooper's years there. He describes the middle of the town in the 1770s: "Squalid cottages had sprung up all along [the river's] steeply sloping banks and

¹¹⁶ Frances L. Johnstone [daughter of Mrs. Lesesne] to Meriwether, Mobile, AL, Sept. 11, 1898, Meriwether Papers, SCL; Ellis, "Thomas Cooper – A Survey of His Life, Part 1 – England," 24, 29, 31-32. Cooper inherited forty acres of land in Kentish Town from his father that generated a £500 yearly income, but Cooper somehow lost this and other money he earned from various enterprises before coming to America and thereafter depended on his own exertion for support. According to Dumas Malone, *Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 231, Cooper received an honorary doctor of medicine from the University of New York in 1817. SCC awarded Cooper an honorary "Doctor of Laws" degree on his resignation in 1833 (see page 363).

¹¹⁷ Ellis, "Thomas Cooper – A Survey of His Life," 31.

any wasteland between them was used to dump waste and even human bones from the [nearby] overflowing churchyard.” One Manchunian official reported, “During many dark and wet winter months the streets here remained uncleansed and without lights.” A visitor wrote: “The town is abominably filthy, the steam engine is pestiferous, the Dyehouses noisesome and offensive and the water of the river as black as ink or the Stygian lake.” Due to the tons of unregulated waste from persons and horses, disease spread rapidly among the poor.¹¹⁸

Hunger was at such a level that food riots occurred, particularly when prices escalated. For instance, one woman “was sentenced to death for encouraging a hundred people to steal potatoes from a cart during food riots in the town.” Riots in Manchester, in addition to garnering Cooper’s sympathy, would have also influenced his opinion that a well-fed working class kept in check (as he would later believe to be the case with Southern slavery) was the best system for the safety of the elite and working classes. As *The Times* put it, “Their [the poor’s] wretchedness seems to madden them against the rich, who they dangerously imagine engross the fruits of their labour without having any sympathy for their wants.” Cooper’s later writings demonstrated that the poor were not imagining the situation: the rich did, indeed, deprive them.¹¹⁹

Throughout his prodigious writings, he frequently decried the various miseries people endured in both the cities and countryside of his homeland. As personal witness to their unhappiness during his youth and young adulthood in England, these scenes remained impressed upon his mind, shaping his philosophy permanently. Cooper often

¹¹⁸ Stuart Hylton, *A History of Manchester* (Phillimore & Co., Ltd., 2003), 50, 52, 74.

¹¹⁹ Hylton, *History of Manchester*, 55-56, 76. About twenty years after Cooper moved to the United States, the appalling Peterloo Massacre occurred in his old hometown in August, 1819, confirming his assessments of workers’ plight (85-86 provides an account of Peterloo).

related specific situations he had seen firsthand in Britain, followed by dire warning to his readers to avoid Britain's errors in order to avoid their consequences. On several occasions, he declared that manufacturing caused much suffering, especially to factory operatives in the nation's cities. Sights of the poor laboring within Britain's manufacturing system inspired Cooper's future decision to fight the tariff, the Northern industrial system, and to advocate secession rather than submission to Britain's fate.

To the former Briton, the mass of factory workers stood among "the most discontented, the most ignorant, the most turbulent of the British population." The fact that these persons lived in wretchedness proved disquieting enough, but the fact that they comprised a potential danger to social stability and were liable to disrupt it at any moment with riots or revolt also disturbed him. "The whole system tends to increase the wealth of a few capitalists, at the expense of the health, life, morals, and happiness of the wretches who labour for them," Cooper explained to his Carolinian compatriots in the 1820s. In the South, however, slaves and poor whites tended the land rather than factory machinery. Cooper warned the United States and particularly the South: "We want in this happy country, no increase of proud and wealthy capitalists, whose fortunes have accumulated by such means." It seems that Cooper failed to see the similarities between the fabulously wealthy planters who hoarded the proceeds of the enslaved workers' labor and the wealthy British industrialists who also failed to share the rewards earned by their workers.¹²⁰

Cooper laid bare the physical condition of factory workers: Manufacturing laborers experienced "life as one lingering disease," suffering from "stomach complaints, typhoid fever, epilepsy, ulcers, neuralgia," and other maladies, due to the "want of good

¹²⁰ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, 21.

air, defect of wholesome food,” lack of “cleanliness, depression,” and habitual drinking. Mothers’ work kept them away from their infants, “producing bowel complaints, bronchitis, and hydrocephalus, that carry off the infant population in great numbers, and tend to debilitate the constitutions of those who survive,” he lamented.¹²¹

Working conditions would be enough to exhaust even a healthy person. Cooper revealed that cotton mill workers labored from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., with only two hours for break: “When the operative comes home, exhausted by such long fatigue, he has no time, or spirits, or inclination to attend to any domestic concern; he is fit only for sleep or sensual indulgence.” Workers received little or no personal consideration from their employers: “Between the capitalists, in the cotton manufacture, and the labourer he employs, there is no personal intercourse, no community of feeling or interest. The master’s head is always at work to discover how he can get his business done cheaper; and the result is almost always at the expense of the labourer,” he declared in his textbook, *A Manual of Political Economy* (1833), The exploited workers had few options: “[W]hat can a combination of poverty effect against the resources of wealth?” Cooper named specific groups of miserable British workers he had personally observed: “The operatives of Birmingham, Sheffield, Staffordshire, Norwich, the iron works of Wales, Lancashire, and Staffordshire, the great woolen establishments of Yorkshire, &c., &c.” Remembering how useless the work-house method was from his years in Britain, he wrote, “No wonder the really productive laboring poor are required to work 14 hours a day, with hardly more than 1½ hour of intermission.”¹²²

¹²¹ Cooper, “Distribution of Wealth,” *Southern Review*, VIII, Nov. 1831, 173.

¹²² Cooper, *A Manual of Political Economy* (Washington: D. Green, 1833), 34-35; Cooper, “Distribution of Wealth,” 175.

The Manchester factories, which developed during Cooper's years there, indeed comprised sobering working-class conditions. "Individuals who switched from working at home to working in the factories had their lives and routines changed drastically," historian Hylton explains. "Early mill-hands would work a fourteen-or-more-hour day in the hot, humid, and dusty conditions, unable to leave the machine, except at designated meal breaks, even for a drink of water or a toilet break." In the case of dubiously more fortunate factory workers, "some mill owners even sent a bucket around three times a day, to enable their operatives to relieve themselves at their posts." Women and children, with whom Cooper greatly sympathized, had particular hardships. In women's case, sexual exploitation was not uncommon, and the impossibility of breastfeeding their children as a factory worker increased the rate of pregnancy. To a glaring degree, the system denied children proper rest, play, and education.¹²³

Cooper, stirred by anger, bluntly described the situation of British child workers and laid the blame squarely at the manufacturers' door. "The machinery of England, is, in many instances, a dreadful curse to that country; and the British manufacturing system would be so to this," he wrote in 1824, solemnly warning South Carolina against adopting the tariff and imitating Britain's labor relations. "The works usually go night and day, [and] one set of boys and girls go to bed, as another set get up to work," Cooper soberly remembered. "The health, the manners, [and] the morals, are all corrupted." Except for a bare subsistence, these child laborers received no benefits for their work, Cooper recounted; they unwittingly forfeited not only their health but also their life training. "They work not for themselves, but for the capitalist who employs them: they are employed on the calculation of how small a sum will subsist a human creature; they

¹²³ Hylton, *History of Manchester*, 70-71.

are machines, as much so as the spindles they superintend: hence they are not calculated to turn readily, from one occupation to another,” Cooper lamented, frustrated with the wealthy owners. These children, if they lived to grow up, would continue in long hours of mindless work until the toll claimed their lives. Cooper embraced classical republican rhetoric, which stated that humans who repeated the same mundane tasks every day would become discontented and dull machinery.¹²⁴

Children lost much parental attention and care in exchange for unsympathetic treatment geared to increasing the bottom line, according to Cooper and others. Manchester historian Hylton states, “In the mill, the factory overseers spent more of their waking day with the children employed there than did the parents.” An early nineteenth-century factory owner explained: “They get their bread almost as soon as they can run about, and by the time they are seven or eight years old bring in money. There is no idleness among us. They come at five in the morning, we allow them half an hour for breakfast, and an hour for dinner; they leave work at six and another set relieves them for the night. The wheels never stand still.” Cooper was offended by the inhumanity of such owners and later concluded that slaves enjoyed better lives under a paternalistic master than did free workers under a disinterested employer.¹²⁵

In addition to damaging their bodies, Cooper believed that poverty and misery took its toll on children’s mental development: “Suppose the original intellect of two infants [were] exactly the same, the one among the thieves of Broad St. Giles in London, and the other among the best class of Philadelphia Quakers; would their intellect be the same at one and twenty?” Conditions were such, Cooper testified, that even an intelligent

¹²⁴ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, 21.

¹²⁵ Hylton, *History of Manchester*, 71-72.

child from the working class had no opportunity to receive education and attain better employment than the work-house, the factory, or crime.¹²⁶

In his experience, children proved a difficulty and source of sadness for parents who could not afford to rear them properly, or at all. In a work he wrote soon after moving to America in 1794, Cooper sadly remembered an occasion when he consoled with a bereaved acquaintance, a poor man who only made 12 shillings a week. This man astonished Cooper when he “consoled himself, with tears in his eyes, for the loss of his eldest son, (who was accidentally drowned), because *he had one less to provide for.*” Time poor British parents spent with their children – moments in life that should be happy – became quite painful for the anxious parent who wondered how long they could sustain their offspring, Cooper reasoned.¹²⁷

Stirred by these memories, he declaimed: “The debilitated, sickly, deformed, and lame children of the factory system, constitute a dreadful defalcation from human comfort, in that country of enormous wealth, luxury, poverty and misery.” The elite could stop the situation if they only cared to, Cooper insisted. The encounters Cooper had with impoverished children in Britain certainly influenced his SCC classroom instruction of how much a responsible slave owner must spend in order to properly sustain each child and adult slave. Cooper avowed, “The factory system, where children are set to actual work thirteen out of twenty-four hours a day, and rendered in consequence deformed and

¹²⁶ Cooper, “View of the Metaphysical and Physiological Arguments in Favor of Materialism” in F.J.V. Broussais, *On Irritation and Insanity*, Thomas Cooper, trans. (Columbia, SC: Printed by S.J. M’Morris, 1831), 352.

¹²⁷ Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America* (London: Printed by J. Johnson, 1794), 55.

crippled, certainly calls for regulation.” Politicians, however, hesitated to implement such regulations.¹²⁸

Cooper was convinced that the British Government “put it out of [the poor’s] power to acquire Knowledge, because their scanty earnings will hardly afford the Means of Subsistence to a family, much less will they allow the expense of an education.” Britain lacked a free compulsory education system at this time. “Having thus contributed to degrade by neglecting our Duty towards them, having made them poor and kept them ignorant,” he lamented, politicians “declare them unfit to be trusted, and thrust them out from any participation of the most essential rights of Man.” Given this passage, it is not surprising that Cooper later educated his slave Sancho, sending him to classes, even though this was illegal in South Carolina.¹²⁹

The scholar denounced politicians that he felt ignored the needs of the British poor. “[T]he Lords and rich Land-holders...buy and sell the people, their nominal Electors, as if they were Slaves appurtenant to the Soil – who treat them as the worst species of Slaves, buying and selling their voices and inclinations; dealing in the Consciences of their Tenantry, as a fair object of traffic, and who profit without remorse, by the wreck of public Virtue!” The British poor who were attached to a lord’s estate, according to Cooper, endured a worse kind of slavery than that in South Carolina. Laying the blame on the government, he exclaimed, “Such is the British House of Commons.” In the 1790s, Edmund Burke had referred to the numerous poor as the “swinish multitude” in Parliament; his heartless attitude infuriated Cooper.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Cooper, *Manual of Political Economy*, 34-35, 47-48.

¹²⁹ Cooper, *Mr. Burke’s Invective against Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Watt, in the House of Commons, on the 30th of April, 1792*, Manchester: Printed by M. Falkner and Co., Market-Place, M,DCC,XCII,” 77-78.

¹³⁰ Cooper, *Reply to Mr. Burke’s Invective*, 15, 71-74.

The former Englishman debunked the politicians' statement that the poor did not support the government: "Neither can it be truly said that the Poor Man pays no taxes; for he expends the produce of his Labour in the most productive Articles of modern Taxation, the Necessaries of Life." He strongly disapproved of Parliament's assigning taxes to staple food items and other life requirements, which, he argued, further deprived the poor of sustenance, warmth, and clothing. "The Fire with which he warms his frozen limbs, and dresses his scanty morsel – the Candle that enables his family to toil at the spinning wheel, or the loom, during those hours which the middling classes devote to relaxation from business, and the great to the Zenith of their pleasurable Career, the small beer that washes down his homely repast – every morsel of his food, every article of his apparel, and even the scanty furniture of his Cottage are all affected by the extravagance, and mismanagement of those who govern." Cooper continued, "The more taxes are required, the more hours he must labour to supply his wants, and the more distant his prospect of obtaining the comforts and conveniences of Existence." Cooper discussed the "numerous Inclosure bills," which confiscated the grazing lands of the poor, and the "impressment" (in his opinion, kidnapping) of the poor as soldiers, which left their families to starve without a breadwinner, as additional examples of how the British government took advantage of the poor.¹³¹

Food proved even more difficult for the British working class to obtain due to "the exchange of home manufacture for foreign food," known as the Corn Laws. Cooper fumed, "In Great Britain, the infamous and unfeeling system of corn-laws, prohibiting this source of supply constitutes a tax of at least 25 per cent, on every poor labouring man in the nation, in order that the farmers, by a monopoly of eatable gain, may sell it to the

¹³¹ Cooper, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective*, 71-74, 79.

poor so high as to enable them to pay high rents to the wealthy and luxurious land owners. These wicked and selfish laws have been complained of without effect, till the people have lost almost all hope of redress.” He explained that additional grain could be obtained from other nations by means of exchange, but that “the government [was] foolish and wicked enough to prevent it,” Cooper wrote in a political economy textbook, hoping to educate the young Southern elite in the safety of unrestricted agriculture. “When the rulers there say, that neither horse nor man shall eat any grain not the growth of that island, whatever may be the increase of population on it,” would be hard to believe “were it not true at this moment.” Cooper noted that, due to legislation, many practical food items were difficult or impossible for the poor to purchase: “This prohibition costs the consumer 121 million sterling annually; besides the duties on importing beef, lamb, pork, sheep, swine, bacon, butter, beer, cheese, hops, hay, &c.”¹³²

Preposterously, Cooper argued, these same legislators “are anxious that the inevitable and natural remedies of poverty, debility, disease, and death, should be superseded by the voluntary abstinence from marriage and propagation among the poor, and are strenuous in recommending to the lower classes this remedy of moral restraint.” Cooper explained that such abstinence would simply not occur on even a small scale, let alone a large one.¹³³

In contrast, even farming in Britain did not provide an individual with sustenance to the level it did in the antebellum South. Cooper had seen English manufacturers fleece the farmer during his years there: “Their object is monopoly; to make the farmer sell at the manufacturer’s price, and buy at the manufacturer’s price.” This was all for the

¹³² Cooper, *Manual of Political Economy*, 34, 39, 45-46.

¹³³ Cooper, *Manual of Political Economy*, 34, 39, 45-46.

manufacturer's pocket, Cooper avowed; "the interest of the community" would be far better achieved by "competition," which the manufacturer had purposely destroyed. "The prohibition of exporting sheep and wool in England, has taken out of the pocket of the farmer, all the profit that the woolen manufacturer has ever made." Cooper elaborated, "The latter has lived and grown rich, by forbidding the former to go to any market, but the home market; he has sheared the shepherd as well as the sheep." Even the farmer, who should be able to be his own boss and enjoy the profits of his labor, had been debased by the capitalist's greed. Cooper later feared that the North would fleece Southern farmers in a similar manner.¹³⁴

The rich, Cooper testified, did nothing: "The feeble voice of suffering Poverty can seldom extend beyond the humble limits of her own habitation; still less can it penetrate the joyous Mansions of the Great, or intrude on the pompous occupations of the Statesmen." He called this defrauding of the poor a "tyrannical System of Violence and Robbery" and indicated that statesmen were determined to ignore it "[b]ecause the overgrown Fortunes of the rich Landholders, the Monopolizers of Wastes and Commons, would experience an almost imperceptible Diminution." The rich, Cooper continued to repeat in his 1834 political economy textbook, could have rectified the situation. "A million of the inhabitants of Great Britain have not at this moment a full supply of the necessaries of life, which eight hundred individuals in that country could be pointed out, who might pay off the national debt of £800,000,000 sterling between them... There is something wrong in this." Based on his impassioned responses to the suffering all around him in his early life, it is no surprise that Cooper became a strong proponent of

¹³⁴ Cooper, *Two Essays*, 10.

paternalistic slave care on the part of Southern elites, the rich of his new homeland, and practiced paternalism himself.¹³⁵

The cities of Britain were dens of untold suffering, but the country poor endured difficulty as well. America's "style of living," Cooper wrote in 1794 after his first visit there, "is, in my opinion, preferable to the country life of Great Britain. In the latter kingdom, the people are divided into, - first, rich proprietors and great lords, who come occasionally to visit their country seats; - secondly, gentleman farmers, whom inclination, or too strait an income, prevent from living in towns; - and thirdly, farming tenantry, who cultivate the ground for a scanty livelihood." Although he expressed his opinion later on that the North was well on its way in the downward direction of Great Britain, Cooper believed that all of America, including the North, was still in a superior state to England and the Continent. In Cooper's judgment, almost anything was superior to Great Britain.¹³⁶

Cooper revealed much about the state of his homeland by comparing it with that of the United States. "Nor have the rich there the power of oppressing the less rich, for poverty, such as in Great Britain, is almost unknown. Nor are their streets crowded with beggars," he exulted. "I saw but one only while I was there, and he was English. You see no where in America the disgusting and melancholy contrast, so common in Europe, of vice, and filth, and rags, and wretchedness in the immediate neighborhood of the most wanton extravagance, and the most useless and luxurious parade." Later, he claimed to discover a society where the rich provided paternalistic care for the poor – that is, Southern elites and their slaves. Britain kept a "military to keep the people in awe," due

¹³⁵ Cooper, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective*, 71-74, 77; Cooper, *Manual of Political Economy*, 104.

¹³⁶ Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 50.

to the robberies, quarrels, and boxing-matches the working class sometimes indulged in. Through the watchful eye of the slaveowner, the enslaved Southern working class was kept in check with only the extremely occasional use of military force.¹³⁷

To Jefferson, Cooper wrote, “I detest the British government in practice.” He testified from his own knowledge, “[T]here is certainly more misery in England than here.” Cooper offered reasons for this poverty: “It may be said if you introduce manufactures, you introduce [vampire-like] capitalists who live by the life blood of the starving poor whom they employ...where the man is converted into a machine, his constitution worn down, his character depraved and his morals destroyed – where he is systematically kept in abject poverty, and to all intents and purposes enslaved!”¹³⁸

Although Cooper did not approve of the extreme British system of “slavery,” he felt that a modified system, not unlike Southern slavery, would indeed be appropriate: “[I]t appears to me that no nation is safe, where there are not some such classes of Society who can be made to work and fight for the rich and idle; a description of people, who neither in this or in any other country will work or fight for themselves.” He conceded, “It is not true in practice, however plausible it may be in theory, that a people enjoying to the utmost, equal rights and comfortable subsistence, diffused through the whole mass of population, are stimulated to defend so desirable a situation in life...I think the reverse is true.” When Cooper discovered a similar socioeconomic system to that which he imagined to Jefferson, he was overjoyed and defended it to his last breath.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 53.

¹³⁸ Cooper to Thomas Jefferson, Northumberland [PA], Aug. 17, 1814, Cooper Papers, SCL.

¹³⁹ Cooper to Jefferson, Aug. 17, 1814, Cooper Papers, SCL.

As a young man, Cooper had originally held antislavery leanings and, in fact, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Letters on the Slave Trade* in 1787. In the work, he made negative statements against the institution of slavery which he, later, directly contradicted. The Manchester attorney even debunked proslavery theories, such as the era's pseudo-biological concept that blacks, unlike whites, could safely cultivate crops in hot climates, which he would later espouse. Explanations exist for this early aberration of Cooper's. He primarily wrote the pamphlet to condemn the slave trade. Although it criticized the institution itself as well, the work was intended to put a stop to the international transporting of slaves with all its attendant horrors, a popular movement in 1780s Britain that met with success in 1808. As Peter Charles Hoffer wrote in his brief synopsis of Cooper's early life, "Cooper's opinions and writings in England were as cross-grained as his career. He opposed the slave trade but did not advocate abolition of slavery." The Free Society of Manchester, the group Cooper belonged to during his time in that city, fostered humanitarian concepts and endeavors. Moreover, it was not uncommon for proslavery Southerners to disavow the slave trade; Thornwell and Preston, for example, stood decidedly against it and thought it far more humane to look after the thriving slave population already living on American soil.¹⁴⁰

Cooper stated himself against immediate emancipation before visiting South Carolina. After moving to the South, he unequivocally stated that slaves living under a master's fatherly care enjoyed a better life than the British poor. He compared the suffering he had often observed in his homeland to what he deemed the healthful condition of South Carolina slaves and judged that slavery was superior. His years in

¹⁴⁰ "The Late Dr. Cooper," *The U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review*, 73; Cooper, *Letters on the Slave Trade* (Manchester: C. Wheeler, 1787); Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Free Press Crisis of 1800: Thomas Cooper's Trial for Seditious Libel* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 29.

Britain laid the foundation for him to accept slavery on encountering the peculiar institution. In addition, his educating visit to the French Revolution of 1792 was still five years in the future. The four months Cooper spent in France destroyed his faith in democracy and made him forever wary of mob rule. The social control of the Southern working class and the rule of the white male elite solved, in Cooper's worried mind, the problems he had witnessed due to the demagoguery of the French Revolution.

B. Cooper's Disgust with the Rule of the Lower Classes in France

In April 1792, Cooper and his friend James Watt, the inventor of the steam engine, were visiting Paris "on private business" when their democratic club, the Manchester Constitutional Society, asked them to act as goodwill ambassadors and take a letter from the Manchester Society to the Jacobin Club. The two Englishmen received an introduction to Robespierre himself. Cooper later recounted, "We passed through a carpenter's shop, and went up a ladder to the place occupied by Robespierre. He was dressed up [like] a dandy...He received me well." Cooper asked a favor; "I told him that I had written an address to deliver to the club, and requested him to deliver it for me, as I spoke French badly."¹⁴¹

The Jacobin clubs consisted of public and private citizens who gathered together to "debate political Subjects, and now and then direct the publication of a political discourse." The minutes of the Jacobin Club of Paris for April 13, 1792 read, "The deputies of the Constitutional Society of Manchester [Cooper and Watt], presented by Monsieur Robespierre, asked for and obtained an entrance to the meeting to solicit the affiliation of that society." Cooper and Watt's discourse, which relayed their own and the

¹⁴¹ "Thomas Cooper, Table Talk," from Evert A. and George L. Duyckink, *Cyclopedia of American Literature*, vol. II, Laird Simons, ed. (Philadelphia: William Rutter and Co., 1875), 141.

club's sympathy with the Revolutionary cause, was read that evening, probably by Cooper himself. The attorney from Manchester had great faith in the French Revolution at that early point. He praised France as possessing "the true political principles and the natural rights of man (lights that do nothing but twinkle in England among the darkness of civil ignorance)," called them the "most determined enemies of arbitrary power," and labeled their mission "philanthropic." The Jacobin Club radiated friendliness in return, inviting Cooper and Watt to attend all their meetings while in Paris. In light of this reception, Cooper expected respect from the French revolutionaries.¹⁴²

At that point in the meeting, "a loud noise was made, and a call for Citizen Cooper...and [his] address," Cooper later recalled. The Englishman asked Robespierre to "take it and read it as he had promised." However, Robespierre "declined, and I insisted, until he refused positively, when the noise increasing, I told him – 'Citoyen Robespierre, vous êtes un coquin [you are a rascal]!' and with that I mounted and delivered my address, which was well received, and with considerable noise." Later in his stay, Cooper recalled, "I...published an address to [the Jacobins] against the despotism of [Robespierre's] views. I and my companion [Watt] were formally denounced by him." Cooper further remarked that "convenience and dispatch" characterized the "revolutionary tribunals of that worthy democrat and republican the citizen Robespierre [sic]" when he gave "something like a hearing to the persons whose heads were destined to the guillotine."¹⁴³

¹⁴² "Thomas Cooper, Table Talk," from *Cyclopedia of American Literature*, 141; Cooper, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective*, 6, 85; F.A. Aulard, *La Société des Jacobins* (Paris: Librairie Jouaust, 1892; reprint Rutgers University, 1973), 496-498. Translation in Appendix of Cooper, "Reply to Mr. Burke," 85-86.

¹⁴³ "Thomas Cooper, Table Talk"; Cooper, *Proceedings against Thomas Cooper, Esquire, President Judge of the Eighth Judiciary District of Pennsylvania, on a Charge of Official Misconduct*, (Lancaster, PA: William Hamilton, 1811), 43.

Cooper clarified his differentiation between the Jacobin Clubs and the French Revolution itself. “At the commencement of the French Revolution, many of the most active inhabitants of Paris...formed themselves into clubs to discuss the important questions...between the court and the people...The Jacobins were originally composed of the earliest, the most disinterested, the most learned of the leaders of the Revolution.” As the movement strayed from its principles, “The popular eloquence, the well managed violence, and the intrigues of Robespierre [sic] and a party who joined him, unfortunately drove off in disgust the more respectable persons above mentioned, and...they and the liberties of the country fell victim to the low cunning of Robespierre [sic].” Cooper plainly voiced his disapproval of the French Revolution.¹⁴⁴

While in Paris, Cooper and Watt took up with a different revolutionary sect, the Brissotians. Being youthful and impulsive at the time, Cooper and Watt tried to talk their Brissotian comrades into accompanying them to Robespierre’s club, where Cooper would challenge the political leader. “I would insult Robespierre before the whole assembly, and compel him to challenge us to fight,” Cooper later recounted at David McCord’s dinner table. “Such was our excitement, I would as leave have fought him as not.” Their new friends prudently refused, and Cooper and Watt put the idea aside. “At last we were denounced by Robespierre,” Cooper recounted, “and Watt went off to Germany, and I

¹⁴⁴ Cooper, *Political Essays, Originally inserted in the Northumberland Gazette, with additions* (Northumberland, PA: Andrew Kennedy, 1799), 28. In *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 34, biographer Dumas Malone mentions in passing that Cooper’s disillusionment with the French Revolution influenced him to reject democracy for a representative rule, but does not analyze the observation: “Later experiences in France and America were to bring their disillusionments, but he began his career as an ardent advocate of the rights of man.” When speaking of Cooper’s time in France, Malone stated, “He did not approve of all that happened in France after his departure, and during his most conservative days in America stated that he returned from Paris disgusted.”

returned to England.” Cooper later used these experiences as illustrations while lecturing at SCC.¹⁴⁵

Cooper resided in France for only four months, but the dramatic experience forever changed him. He was present “during the most dreadful times of that Revolution, during its most bloody period.” He later told David McCord, “Now those four months that I spent in Paris were the most happy and pleasant of my life...I lived four years.” He continued, “Every moment was a century. While there every energy of my mind was called out, every moment engaged. Some important event unceasingly occurred, and incessantly occupied the mind.” The young Cooper enjoyed excitement and had a rather daredevil approach to danger while visiting France; he was only thirty-three at the time. Despite the thrill he experienced, however, he was also deeply disillusioned with democracy as a result of witnessing the brutal revolution firsthand.¹⁴⁶

When he returned to Great Britain, he no longer approved of the Revolution and Robespierre had denounced him. Despite these facts, the British government investigated Cooper due to his “support” of the French Revolution. MP Edmund Burke denounced both Cooper and James Watt in the House of Commons two weeks after their return. Cooper referred to “that most horrible and despotic house, the House of Commons of England” and “that chamber of abominations, the House of Lords” when later remembering the experience. Burke reported in two major newspapers that Cooper and Watt had gone to France “to enter into an alliance with a set in France of the worst traitors and regicides that had ever been heard of, the club of the Jacobins.” Cooper

¹⁴⁵ “Thomas Cooper, Table Talk.”

¹⁴⁶ William W. Freehling in *The Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, confirms the theory that Cooper’s time in France, although short, was crucial in his personal formation and to his behavior in the United States afterward, especially in South Carolina and his political support of slavery and states’ rights.

affirmed his loyalty to the British constitution. As France and Britain were at peace, and Cooper had not come as a British representative, but as a friendly gesture from the Manchester Constitutional Society, he believed his conduct blameless. In his defense pamphlet, Cooper roundly critiqued the unrepresentative nature, high monetary cost, and other inherent flaws in the British government and, in contrast, praised the American republic as a government by and for the people. The British government banned Cooper's pamphlet, and he and his associate, scientist Dr. Joseph Priestley, immigrated to America after the incident.¹⁴⁷

During his last days in England, Cooper made two acquaintances that influenced him in favor of republicanism and American government. A relative of Cooper's wrote: "In 1792 Cooper was an enthusiastic admirer of Thomas Paine, and it was he who engaged the artist Romney to paint the great portrait of Paine." Paine authored *Common Sense*, an influential pamphlet which convinced many colonial Americans to fight Britain for independence. He also met Thomas Jefferson. Cooper's granddaughter later wrote: "His very close friendship with President Jefferson whom Dr. Cooper had met in London before his coming to America is fully evidenced by their very interesting correspondence." Cooper viewed American government as an ideal combination of classical republicanism and representative government. His friendships with the luminaries Paine and Jefferson reinforced his admiration for the United States.¹⁴⁸

In 1794, as a new resident of the United States, Cooper continued his denouncements of the French Revolution. The "ferocious injustice of many of their

¹⁴⁷ Cooper, *Reply to Burke's Invective*, 3-5, 11, 17, 19, 26-27, 29; Cooper, *The Proceedings against Thomas Cooper*, 1811, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Moncune D. Conway to Colyer Meriwether, London, Feb. 26, 1897, and Julia L. Waddill [Cooper's son Priestley's daughter] to Meriwether, Washington, Nov. 28, 1897, Meriwether Papers, SCL.

practices” disturbed him. “The vague, loose, declamatory, prejudging style of their accusations; their denial of a full and fair hearing...their total disregard to past character and services, to genius and learning” contradicted Cooper’s principles. “[T]heir evident accusations from motives of robbery and plunder, against persons whose only crime appears to be their possession of property” demonstrated Cooper’s disapproval of their slaughter of French aristocrats. As an author who cherished freedom of the press, he stood at variance with “the...absolute despotism they have established not only over the words, actions, and writings of men in France, but almost over their very thoughts; amounting to a perfect annihilation of the liberty of the press, and the liberty of speech.” He found “their present habitual delight in contemplating the executions of their numerous delinquents” alarming. The United States, “where I may have time to correct erroneous opinions without the orthodox intervention of the halter or the guillotine,” proved far more to his taste.¹⁴⁹

In the interest of continued national safety, Cooper declared himself against universal suffrage: “I am inclined to think that a line of exclusion may be drawn, and that no injustice is done by debarring those [persons] from voting in the choice of national representatives, who on account of their poverty, are exempted from the payment of taxes.” He felt it far safer for the nation and the elite class, of which he was a member, to keep the working class from gaining too much power and staging a dangerous revolt. Cooper rationalized, “[I]t is absurd to give a right of legislating concerning the property of others to those who have none of their own; and who risk nothing on the event of their own regulations.” This opinion would fit logically with his French experiences and with

¹⁴⁹ Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 85-86. Cooper provided additional commentary on his disapproval of the French government here.

his future position as a Southern elite slaveholder. In 1814, Cooper shared with Jefferson, “I shall no longer declare it as my opinion that in political struggles ‘no effort is ever lost.’ Heretofore I [believed this], but...the French Revolution [has] shaken my Optimism.”¹⁵⁰

Cooper’s experiences in France influenced him tremendously, predisposing him to approve of the Southern republic with its excellent track record of preventing revolt from its enslaved working class. Fox-Genovese and Genovese affirm in *The Mind of the Master Class* that Southern elites disapproved of the French Revolution: “As republicans, slaveholders welcomed the overthrow of the monarchy and the demise of the aristocracy, but as substantial propertyholders, they treasured social order and had no use for social leveling.” Like Cooper, Southerners’ disillusionment gradually increased: “[T]he victory of the radical Montagnards...worried them; the August-September massacres and the ensuing Terror frightened them; and the emergence of the revolutionary black republic of Haiti froze their blood. Southern slave society looked better and better.” Fox-Genovese and Genovese state that “knowledgeable Southerners had long expected the insurrection of unemployed and exploited free workers and the collapse of the free-labor system into anarchy and despotism. John Randolph, Thomas Cooper, Thomas Roderick Dew, and John C. Calhoun had identified the destructive implications of the great social upheavals in Europe and predicted mounting ferocity.” Moreover, “The decades-long critique of the French Revolution of 1789 reinforced the celebration of slavery as the world’s great

¹⁵⁰ Cooper, “Propositions respecting the Foundation of Civil Government Read at the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, on March 2, 1787, and first published in the Transactions of that Society,” vol. 3, p. 481, 1790. Reprint, Appendix in *Reply to Mr. Burke’s Inveective*, 105; Cooper to Jefferson, Northumberland [PA], Aug. 17, 1814, Cooper Papers, SCL.

conservative republican social force.” At irreconcilable variance with the social conditions in England and France, Cooper immigrated to the United States in 1794.¹⁵¹

II. Cooper’s Disillusionment with the North, England, and France

Praising the United States, Cooper wrote: “It certainly does appear to me preferable to the present British government...and not being an advocate for propagating liberty by the bayonet, or terrify a nation into freedom by the guillotine, I chuse [sic] for this also among other reasons, to quit a country whose politics I cannot approve.” Cooper encouraged his fellow Englishmen who were either impoverished or politically opposed to the government to remove to America for better lives.¹⁵²

Cooper expected to have complete freedom of speech in the United States. He sought “in America in the first place, an asylum from civil persecution...[a] spot where you would suffer no defalcation in political rights...where you might be permitted to enjoy a perfect freedom of speech as well as of sentiment.” After being imprisoned under the Alien and Sedition Acts for published criticism of John Adams, and experiencing the mockeries of republican government when serving as a Pennsylvania district judge, he warned that the North was imitating British corruption. Even on his first visit, he wrote, “New York, for instance, is a perfect counterpart of Liverpool: the situation of the docks, the form of streets, the state of the public buildings, the inside as well as the outside of the houses, the manners, the amusements, the mode of living among the...inhabitants.” He continued, “Something like European manners, and something of the ill effect of inequality of riches, is to be found in the great towns of America, but nothing like what an inhabitant of the old country experiences.” He later declared that the South, with its

¹⁵¹ Genovese and Fox-Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 15-16, 37, 53.

¹⁵² Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, iii-iv.

slave system, stood aloft as the true American republic, untainted by British influence, and the last safeguard for liberty.¹⁵³

The political troubles Cooper endured in Pennsylvania left him with a lifelong distaste for strong federal governments. In 1799, Cooper was “indicted, and found guilty of having printed and published what was alleged to be a libel against Mr. John Adams, the then President of the United States.” As Cooper later explained, he had merely made “observations and inferences respecting the tendency and character of the public conduct of that gentleman in his official capacity.” Even so, he was charged with a \$400 fine and imprisoned for eight months. Cooper declared that the Sedition Law “was an unconstitutional law, such as the Legislature that passed it had no right to enact.” He later called the late 1790s “the reign of terror,” recalling his disillusionment in Revolutionary Paris, where his life and liberty was also threatened.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 3, 49, 56-57. Cooper was further prejudiced against the North and the Federalist party by an incident occurring while he was a judge in Pennsylvania, as described in his *Proceedings against Thomas Cooper* (1811), 1, 5-7, 50-51. The official statement against him asked that he be removed from duty due to misconduct of various types. After observation, Cooper did not believe that “justice” and “tolerance” were “the necessary fruits of universal suffrage, as it is exercised in Pennsylvania.” The “ignorant class of the community” as well as “persons punished by the court for misconduct and criminal offenses” had been appealed to as easy game for signatures on the petition to remove Cooper. His fellow judges stood up for him and wrote letters on his behalf. After being denied the right to speak, the governor dismissed Cooper. “Who were my accusers?” Cooper wrote. “Young men; lately introduced into the world; of no standing in society; offended by having incurred public reprimand for insolence, ignorance, falsehood, or fraud.” This experience encouraged Cooper’s affection for South Carolina’s elite rule.

¹⁵⁴ Cooper, “Petition of Thomas Cooper, President of the South Carolina College, Praying that he may be refunded the amount of a fine...”, Feb. 1, 1830. United States. Congress. House of Representatives; no.149, 1-2; Cooper, “Thomas Cooper Report,” Rep. N. 473, House of Representatives, May 20, 1834, 1-2. “Proceedings in the Circuit Court of the United States, Held in the City of Philadelphia, for the District of Pennsylvania, April 11, 1800, Against Thomas Cooper” in *An Account of the trial of Thomas Cooper of Northumberland; on a charge of libel against the United States...by Thomas Cooper*. United States. Circuit Court (3rd circuit), contains a full account of Cooper’s trial. Cooper’s “libelous” writings appeared in the Reading, PA “Weekly Advertiser” on Oct. 26, 1799, according to Elbert Vaughan Wells, *Dr. Thomas Cooper, Economist* (Portsmouth, VA: National Printing Company, 1917). In *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 222, Malone admits that Cooper’s time in Pennsylvania disillusioned him on the efficacy of democracy and influenced his conservatism, but does not connect Cooper’s arrest and imprisonment under the Alien and Sedition Acts to his conservatism. “During his term as judge and professor in Pennsylvania he unquestionably experienced a strong anti-democratic reaction,” Malone wrote. “No longer content with theories he had once proclaimed, he was groping after a science of politics based upon experience.”

Cooper, averse to the Federalists, supported Jefferson, the quintessential classical republican. As mutual supporters and friends, they corresponded regularly for over twenty years until Jefferson's death in 1826. Jefferson wrote, "Doctr. Cooper [is] probably the best classical scholar in the U.S." Cooper paid two or three visits to Monticello. In an 1804 letter to Jefferson, Cooper mentioned "our party" as opposed to the Federalists. He avowed, "If the experiment of Republican Government is to succeed at all, it must be under your auspices."¹⁵⁵

In *The Elusive Republic*, Drew McCoy acknowledges Cooper's commitment to classical republicanism and the Jeffersonian farming ideal, along with his distrust of manufacturing. "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God," Jefferson wrote in praise of the farming lifestyle. Cooper also believed that agriculture provided an environment where the poor could enjoy prosperity and freedom. Farmers were not dependent on "customers" for their livelihood and could keep their virtue and freedom, living on the land well away from the depraved cities of poverty and vice. McCoy observes that "Cooper embraced [Adam] Smith's argument that American capital could be more beneficially and productively invested in agriculture and the 'home trade' than in an overextended carrying trade." This belief would figure significantly in Cooper's embrace of the South's agricultural economy.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Cooper to Jefferson, Northumberland [PA], Feb. 18, 1804; Cooper to Jefferson, Northumberland [PA], March 18, 1806; Jefferson to William Cary, Monticello, May 4, 1819, in "Some Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson" in *Scribner's*, Nov. 1904; Cooper to Emanuel Eyre, Columbia, SC, Dec. 4, 1820, Cooper Papers, SCL; Cooper, *Consolidation: an account of parties in the United States, from the Convention of 1787, to the present period*. 2nd ed. (Columbia, SC: Times and Gazette Office, 1830), 14.

¹⁵⁶ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 12, 111, 157, 176-177. McCoy outlines the definition and prominence of classical republican thought in young America that was quite similar to Cooper's: "Americans usually associated large-scale manufacturing with poverty, luxury, propertyless dependence, and the Old World system of political and social inequality." Philosophers used examples of factory workers' discontent in their jobs. Noah Webster, for instance, argued in the Boston newspaper: "A man who makes heads of pins or springs of watches, spends his days in that manufacture and never looks beyond it."

Though his opinions changed in later days, on first arrival in the United States, Cooper observed with approval the relative lack of manufactures in the northeast: “I do not think this an evil to the country, because I detest the manufacturing system; observing the fallacious prosper[i]ty it induces, its instability, and its evil effect of the happiness and the morals of the bulk of the people.” Echoing classical republican theory, he continued, “You must on this system have a large portion of the people converted into mere machines, ignorant, debauched, and brutal, that the surplus value of their labour of 12 to 14 hours a day, may go into the pockets and supply the luxuries of rich, commercial, and manufacturing capitalists.” His concern about the North’s imitation of British ways, and his fear that they would not only become like Britain but drag the South down with them, surfaced. “I am grieved to see that so sensible a man as Mr. [Alexander] Hamilton can urge, in his report on American manufactures, their furnishing employment to children, as an argument for establishing them in America.” It is consistent that Cooper, who had observed British factory workers, rejected the Federalism of Hamilton and embraced the Republicanism of Jefferson. He “hoped to see the time” when all youths in the nation, boys and girls, were being educated rather than working, and, in later life, unsuccessfully advocated for free compulsory education in South Carolina.¹⁵⁷

Established in the United States, he wrote that “the British monarchy [is] the most corrupt and corrupting government of Europe.” He then voiced his displeasure with democracy and mob rule, learned firsthand: “I went over to France in 1792, an enthusiast, and I left it in disgust.” Of the North, he stated, “I came here; and seventeen years experience...has also served to convince me that it may have its faults; that it is not quite so perfect in practice as it is beautiful in theory, and that the speculations of my youth do

¹⁵⁷ Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 77-78.

not receive the full sanction of my maturer age: nor do I find that justice and disinterestedness, wisdom and tolerance, are the necessary fruits of universal suffrage, as it is exercised in Pennsylvania.” He continued, “There are many good and some wise men in the legislature; but no one can say, that the wisdom and moderation of the community at large, are exclusively represented at the seat of government.” This exposure gave him a decided taste for a republic ruled by a few, the rights of the states, and a preference for the “noble little state” of South Carolina. Once a member of that society, he enthusiastically trained its future leaders to protect and preserve its socioeconomic systems.¹⁵⁸

During his residency in Pennsylvania, Cooper also developed a further taste for Jeffersonian Republicanism due to its praise of agriculture, a philosophy which the South embodied more closely than the North. The working class there could be comfortably fed, unlike in Britain, and trade depended on the needs of individuals, not their whims of desire. “It appears, from the late account of the exports of the United States, that the gross amount for the last annual period was about Sixty Millions of Dollars,” he marveled. “These exports consist of articles of the first necessity, Grain and Flour – Beef, Pork, and Fish – Lumber and Tobacco – Rice and Indigo...they are not articles that depend on a forced market.” This system assured food even to the working class. In contrast, “[t]he plated candlesticks or buckles of Birmingham, and the velvets and muslins of Manchester, may require to be known before they come into demand, and the wants of purchasers must frequently be excited and created by novelty, before the articles to be sold can find sufficient vent. But what fashion is there in a bushel of wheat or a cask of flour?” Cooper posited that the republican farmer, who employed himself and possessed

¹⁵⁸ Cooper, *Political Essays*, 28; Cooper, “Proceedings against Thomas Cooper,” 1811, 6.

not only ready food but also ready money, had true freedom, not the British manufacturing laborer. “Undoubtedly, agriculture is the healthiest of employments,” Cooper admonished embryonic Southern leaders in his textbook. Even the slaves of a Southern plantation farmer had security in Cooper’s opinion because they lived and worked on the soil. Slaves were assured at least some food from the master’s land, while the British factory worker suffered severe malnutrition.¹⁵⁹

Cooper wrote that two-thirds to three-fourths of Britain’s land lay uncultivated, and France had similar problems. The starvation issues in both nations could practically be solved, he explained, if England and France cultivated all their available ground. Based on these observations, Cooper emphasized that the American people’s best avocation was farming: “If any profession is to be fostered, let it be the tiller of the earth, the fountain head of all wealth, and all power, and all prosperity...No fear but if you raise produce and people, they will find their market.” He later supported the agricultural-based plantation system, training and encouraging future planters as a SCC professor.¹⁶⁰

Reflecting on his many years’ residence in Pennsylvania, Cooper later described the Federalist Party as violating the Constitution and the founders’ intentions of a confederation of states in favor of a rigid federal government. He declared that they had a “predilection for the British government and its forms,” which Cooper continued to greatly disapprove. During the 1790s, Cooper explained, “the principles of our own revolution, and our separation from Great Britain, were attacked [by the federalists], and

¹⁵⁹ Cooper, “Political Arithmetic No. 1” in *Political Essays*, 1; Cooper, *Manual of Political Economy*, 45-46. McCoy in *The Elusive Republic*, 176-177, mentions James Madison’s cautionary tale of British buckle manufacturers which is quite similar to Cooper’s illustrations: “In his subsequent ‘Fashion’ essay of March 22, 1792, Madison examined the liabilities of specific forms of non-household manufacturing enterprise. Citing...the English buckle makers who were suddenly put out of work by ‘the mutability of fashion,’ he strongly cautioned Americans against developing luxury manufactures...Workers in these industries could never enjoy a sure subsistence.”

¹⁶⁰ Cooper, “Political Arithmetic No. 1,” 8-9, 20.

every man who did not profess to admire the British constitution was regarded as an enemy to our own existing government.” The republicans, however, “revolted at the notion of giving preference to the monarchical principles and forms of Great Britain.” The Federalists’ similarity to the British, not to mention their affection for them, caused Cooper to admire the states’ rights cause of the South.¹⁶¹

Remarking on Cooper’s increased conservatism and support of slavery after his move to South Carolina, Malone hints in his 1926 biography of Cooper that prior experiences of disillusionment with democracy may have influenced him to accept the slave system: “Presumably he had become less a theorist and more a realist as he had grown older, and with his rejection of democracy as a sufficient solution of human problems had surrendered also his former theories about human equality. At any rate, explain it how you will, he had no quarrel with his neighbors on the slavery question and seems never to have suffered from any suspicions on this score.” This examination of Cooper ventures still further, arguing that his haunting memories of French working-class revolt led him to embrace slavery as far safer for the elite.¹⁶²

In fact, in support of the concept that Cooper experienced European influence, Cooper declared himself against emancipation before his move to the South, while still residing in the North. In a letter to Jefferson, he wrote, “I really have not made up my mind, whether it be not in the order, and conformable to the will of Providence, that for some centuries at least to come, men should be deceived by frauds and lies: and whether

¹⁶¹ Cooper, *Consolidation*, 10, 14; Cooper, *Charleston Courier*, June 18, 1804.

¹⁶² Dumas Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1961. First published 1926 by Yale University Press), 155, 284-290. Malone only briefly discusses Cooper’s importance as a proslavery philosopher and author. Although he states that Cooper hated Great Britain and its institutions, particularly monarchy and manufacturing, he makes no mention of Cooper’s observation of the British poor or the fact that it drove his proslavery views, his ideal of classical republicanism, and his passionate support for the Southern way of life.

these be not necessary to keep them in good order, and whether a sudden blaze of truth would not do as much harm to the mass of mankind, *as sudden emancipation to the negroes* [italics mine].” This statement also supports Cooper’s belief in representative government by the elite, not a democracy which put the masses in charge, and his support of a system to prevent working class agitation.¹⁶³

III. Cooper in SC and the Culmination of his Paternalistic, Antidemocratic Views

As the result of a series of misadventures, Cooper relocated to Columbia, South Carolina, and accepted the chair of Chemistry at SCC in 1819, receiving the additional position of president in 1820. Cooper was ecstatic: he received \$2,500 a year in addition to a fine house, the 110 students admired him, and “All my neighbours here, behave with great kindness and attention.” His role in state politics began soon after his arrival: “[T]he Legislature met; and it has been intimated to me that I must give them a few lectures, which I shall do of course.”¹⁶⁴

Cooper admired the fact that the South had little in common with Britain. Wealthy masters watched over the enslaved Southern working class with a firm but paternalistic hand. The white poor, which Cooper occasionally recognized, had many opportunities for self-support in agriculture. “In 1826, Thomas Cooper and his associates at South Carolina College [as president, Cooper would have been the primary author] remarked in a report on primary and secondary education that America had no class of poor similar to that of Europe, where taxation oppressed the lower classes,” Fox-Genovese and Genovese

¹⁶³ Cooper to Jefferson, Carlisle, [PA], March 1814, and Cooper to Jefferson, Columbia, March 12, 1821, Cooper Papers, SCL.

¹⁶⁴ Between his Pennsylvania judgeship and SCC, Cooper held the position of chemical chair at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA. Jefferson promised him a chair at the University of Virginia, but its opening was delayed, and Cooper was forced to find ready employment. Cooper to Emanuel Eyre, Columbia, SC, Feb. 10, 1820, and Dec. 4, 1820, Cooper Papers, SCL.

wrote. Cooper stated, “If any of our citizens approach this situation, except through sickness or personal disability, it is for the most part owing to a culpable want, either of industry or frugality.” As opposed to the squalor of the British poor Cooper had witnessed, the Southern poor fit into two categories: “the ‘respectable’ who did their best to work hard, attend church, and cooperate with their better-off neighbors; and the ‘trash’ who formed a lumpenproletariat of asocials, antisocials, and criminals.”¹⁶⁵

In fact, during Cooper’s years in South Carolina, “he called for measures to employ the poor.” This is not surprising considering Cooper’s concern for the British poor and exhortations for the paternalistic care of slaves. Fox-Genovese and Genovese further state, “Cooper’s sympathy for laborers might have been expected, for he had been a social and political radical in his younger days in England and America. Even later as a proslavery secessionist, he opposed legal restraints on trade unions and called for laws to balance the power of the capitalists.” Cooper’s approval for these economic power checks demonstrates his strong desire to preclude British working class misery in South Carolina.¹⁶⁶

After fourteen years in South Carolina, Cooper’s approval of the place still remained strong. He was especially proud of his success in leading the state’s resistance of the pro-Northern tariff. In 1833, he wrote to an old friend, Emanuel Eyre: “If this Union is to be preserved, and the principles of liberty to be maintained, it will be a result due exclusively to the good sense and noble bearing of this little State, not containing more than 300[,]000 white inhabitants: but they are honest, talented and fearless. Less selfish than any mass of people I have met with.” Sam Haynes, in a comment about

¹⁶⁵ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 250.

¹⁶⁶ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 168, 173.

Cooper in *Unfinished Revolution*, supports the conclusion that Cooper wholeheartedly considered himself a Southerner. “Having become an American citizen more than thirty years [before his tariff defense], Cooper could hardly be characterized as a foreign interloper. Indeed, as a longtime critic of British policies and traditions (he had been an especially vocal critic of American reliance on English common law), he was something of an Anglophobe himself.” Cooper’s daughter, Frances Cooper Lesesne, testified to his pro-Southern attitude: “Neither did Dr. Cooper soon regret coming to the South. Its people and customs pleased him, and he adopted the feelings and prejudices, if you will, of that Section with all the ardor of an impulsive nature. To the day of his death, all the influence of his powers and talents was devoted to her rights and interests, or what he deemed to be such.”¹⁶⁷

In fact, Cooper was so happy in South Carolina that Kenneth Platte, in his 1967 thesis “The Religious, Political, and Educational Aspects of the Thomas Cooper Controversy,” attributes Cooper’s belief in slavery solely to his move to South Carolina, not to his earlier European experiences. “This revolution of thought in regard to slavery can be ascribed to acculturation on the part of Cooper...it was while residing in South Carolina that he abandoned [his previous democratic views.]” Elsewhere, I have argued that the Carolina environment, with its warmly hospitable elite, admiring students, and other pleasant aspects, seduced Cooper into accepting proslavery views, but, as the result of further research, now contend that Cooper’s English and French experiences and sights

¹⁶⁷ Cooper to Joseph Priestly, Jan. 26, 1833, Cooper Papers, SCL; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 172; Fanny Cooper Lesesne to “Gath,” c. 1883, Meriwether Papers, SCL. “Gath” contributed a letter to the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, which he sent to the editor John McLean. Amos Cummings had sent Lesesne, Cooper’s daughter who grew up in Columbia, a letter concerning Gath’s letter dated NY, July 17, 1883. Colyer Meriwether received Lesesne’s letter to Gath in a letter from Lesesne’s daughter, Frances L. Johnstone, on Sept. 11, 1898.

of their suffering lower classes inspired Cooper's move to conservatism and altered him, preparing him to accept the Southern slave system with open arms on relocating to South Carolina.¹⁶⁸

IV. Cooper as Slaveowner

This examination of Cooper's treatment of his slaves posits his commitment to paternalism as a key component of his proslavery thought. In contrast, Daniel Kilbride, in "Slavery and Utilitarianism: Thomas Cooper and the Mind of the Old South," states that Cooper used utilitarianism to defend slavery, an institution he valued primarily because it benefitted masters. Although Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism, declared himself against slavery, he argues, Cooper used his ideas to justify it with success. Kilbride attests that "[i]n contrast to northern institutions, [Cooper] insisted, southern slaveholding easily passed the test of utility – the greatest good for the greatest number – by providing for the best interests of blacks and whites alike." Kilbride takes Cooper's utilitarianism so far that he concludes, "Thus Cooper defended the benefits of slavery for blacks not on the basis of planter paternalism, but on planter self-interest." In fact, Kilbride states that Cooper's beliefs concerning the biological inferiority of blacks convinced him that slaves proved incapable of human feelings like sadness, while

¹⁶⁸ Kenneth R. Platte, "The Religious, Political, and Educational Aspects of the Thomas Cooper Controversy" (unpublished thesis, University of South Carolina, 1967), 8, 24-25. Platte's thesis primarily discusses the religious controversy surrounding Cooper's deist beliefs and the questions the issue raised concerning his fitness as an educator. In his recital of the events of the nullification debate, he emphasizes Cooper's significance. For example, Platte quotes and confirms Colyer Meriwether's 1909 statement: Cooper "was the forerunner of Calhoun in nullification doctrines, and laid the academic foundation for Calhoun to build on." Platte does not include Cooper's European or Northern experiences in his concise work. See pages 21-25 for Platte's discussion of Cooper's proslavery views; Jamie Diane Wilson, "Evil Communications Corrupt Good Morals," *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (2014).

Cooper's paternalism and care for his own slaves contradicts this, at least in some measure.¹⁶⁹

Malone, Cooper's biographer, wrote in the 1920s, "Cooper's humanitarianism was to be tempered somewhat by realism in his later years. Occasionally even he came to terms with his environment. In South Carolina he owned slaves and accepted African slavery as an institution." By adopting proslavery beliefs, however, Cooper felt he was continuing to practice the humanitarianism he had always valued. Slavery was, to him, a far more humane provision for the working classes as opposed to the neglect they endured in Great Britain. Malone further remarks that "Negroes were not included by him among the 'people.'" It is true that Cooper did not consider blacks to be United States citizens, but British working-class individuals had but few legal rights during the late eighteenth century. With his paternalistic treatment of his own slaves and his encouragement to others to do likewise, Cooper no doubt believed he was treating blacks more like actual "people" than Manchester society had treated their lower classes. Nor was this change a mere acclimation to his new Southern environment. Rather, his past experiences in Great Britain and France primed him to embrace the system upon his relocation to the South. The fact that he immediately bought slaves of his own and treated them in a paternalistic manner supports this concept. To him, humanitarian goals prompted paternalistic slavery. No record remains of Cooper punishing his personal

¹⁶⁹ Daniel Kilbride, "Slavery and Utilitarianism: Thomas Cooper and the Mind of the Old South," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Aug. 1993), 469-476, 481, 485. Kilbride mentions that Cooper judged Northern manufacturers "who lived off the labor of the starving poor" and spends two-thirds of a page (479) acknowledging that Cooper used the suffering of British workers as one of his arguments in favor of slavery, but does not venture beyond acknowledgement. Kilbride holds that Cooper remained satisfied with the French Revolution, while I contend that, though he briefly approved of it in theory, he was disillusioned by his firsthand witness of its reality. Kilbride contends that Cooper did not influence "southern intellectuals" with his utilitarian ideas – not even Hammond. This dissertation argues that Cooper's influence was felt to a substantial degree from 1820 to 1865, especially in the case of his protégé Hammond (see chapter 6 and the appendix.)

slaves (though it is, of course, possible that he did), but he did discipline a college-owned slave on at least one occasion. This is consistent with paternalism: a father figure provided, protected, and punished those under his care.¹⁷⁰

Soon after his arrival in South Carolina, the professor purchased a slave named Sancho and his wife, whose name is unknown. Sancho served as Cooper's valet until the professor's death and the people of Columbia knew the slave well. In addition, Cooper purchased two slave families. His daughter Frances Lesesne wrote in 1883, "He is accused of having been an abolitionist when one of his first acts on settling in Columbia, was to purchase two families of slaves, who with their descendants, lived with the family till its disruption, and were then divided among the children, as was the custom in those days, without anybody's moral sense being at all shocked by it. One of them, an old man named Sancho, who had been Dr. Cooper's faithful and confidential servant, such a servant as only slaves could be, was, with his wife, liberated by a provision of Dr. Cooper's will, and fully provided for." Since law forbade the manumission of slaves in South Carolina, Cooper must have made arrangements in which an owner he trusted gave Sancho money and allowed him to live as if he were free, or some similar situation.¹⁷¹

When Cooper took up residence in the SCC President's House, he placed his two slave families in the basement, but soon worried that this threatened their health. An 1833 trustees' report read: "Dr. Cooper has, at an expense of about 320\$ erected a comfortable wooden building of 4 rooms for the accommodation of Servants, which has, as yet, suffered no material injury from decay and is in a good state of repairs. Before that time,

¹⁷⁰ Malone, *Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 20, 290.

¹⁷¹ Fanny Cooper Lesesne to "Gath," c. 1883; Frances L. Johnstone [daughter of Mrs. Lesesne] to Meriwether, Mobile, AL, Sept. 11, 1898, Meriwether Papers, SCL.

his servants were lodged in rooms in the cellar of the Presidents' house; which besides other inconveniences proved unhealthy; and the object of erecting the wooden building was to avoid these consequences." Although Cooper surely wished to protect his investment, it seems certain that the size of the expenditure (\$8,675 in 2016 currency) indicates paternalistic concerns, as well.¹⁷²

Cooper's treatment of his valet Sancho further reflects Cooper's paternalist methods. Sancho's previous owner decided to sell him because of his "loud praying" which created a "disturbance on the plantation." Cooper purchased him, granting him permission to "pray all he pleased." This was particularly notable because Cooper, as a Deist, despised religion, denied Biblical accuracy, and might have been expected to be irritated by the sound of loud praying. Sancho, in contrast, had long been a church leader at the Methodist church for blacks in Columbia. Sancho served Cooper well, and after several years, Cooper presented him with a Bible. One source even states that Sancho persuaded Cooper to a belief in Christianity. Sancho later confided to Dr. Whiteford Smith, SCC grad and longtime Columbia resident, Cooper's deathbed confession that he had lost his religion in his youth as a result of "wild and brilliant companions. 'But now, Sancho,' he exclaimed, 'I must find it again.'" After Sancho conversed with his dying master, the former slave "felt sure his master's sins were forgiven and that he had found the good way again" and testified that "he had died in such peace." Such a relationship implies a mutual respect that would have supported a commitment to paternalism of a more than common stamp.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 2, Nov. 1833, SCL.

¹⁷³ Anna Maria Barnes, "The Religious Slave and the Skeptic Master," n.p. n.d, Cooper Papers, SCL.

Another SCC grad, James Carlisle of the Wofford College faculty, confirmed this story: “I knew old ‘Sancho’ the body servant of the Dr, a faithful African, who died just before the War.” Carlisle further attested, “I saw the...Family Bible, with an inscription like this in it, ‘Thomas Cooper, to his faithful servant, Sancho.’ Sancho promised, that our College [SCC] should have this Bible after his death, but it was burnt in the great fire of the ‘War.’ Sancho told me that in the Dr’s last illness, he prayed at the bedside, at the Dr’s request.”¹⁷⁴

Carlisle also left behind testimony that Cooper formally educated Sancho: “He [Sancho] told me, that often, when the Dr would have invited company on Tuesday evening, his master would remind him, ‘Sancho, this is your Class Meeting night.’ Sancho would answer, ‘O never mind, Master, you have company. I will stay and wait on them.’ The Dr would say, ‘No Sancho, you go to your Class meeting.’” Despite the fact that educating a slave was illegal in South Carolina, Cooper insisted that Sancho receive an education of the type that was not available to the peasantry of Europe. Further attestation to Cooper’s paternalistic treatment of his slaves exists in his obituary, which stated that Cooper was “kind to servants.”¹⁷⁵

It is, of course, quite possible that Cooper treated his personal slaves in negative ways on occasion, but, if so, no extant record exists. A trustees’ report mentions an incident where he discussed punishing Jacko, one of the college slaves (see chapter six.) On the whole, however, it appears that Cooper was personally committed to the more

¹⁷⁴ James H. Carlisle to Meriwether, Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC, May 4, 1897, Meriwether Papers, SCL.

¹⁷⁵ Carlisle to Meriwether, May 4, 1897, Meriwether Papers, SCL; “The Late Dr. Cooper,” *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review*, 73; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College, 1801-1865*, 177.

positive side of the paternalist ethos and influenced SCC students to follow the same pattern.

V. Cooper's Proslavery Beliefs and Publications

Cooper's proslavery writings, with their themes of slavery as a humanitarian institution and blacks as biologically inferior to whites, influenced large numbers of Southern readers. The Columbia *Telescope*, a paper all literate males of the city read, frequently published Cooper's articles. During this era, "[p]robably the most important means of propagating political views were the newspapers. The outstanding states rights organ was the *Telescope*...Cooper's close relationship with Editor David McCord, and the *Telescope's* partisan defense of Cooper led to accusations that it was his personal paper," historian Kenneth Platte wrote. "The power of the *Telescope* is seen by the widespread reproduction of its articles by the other newspapers." Another influential paper, the *Charleston Mercury*, "a strong supporter of states' rights, [that] defended the 'calculate the value of the Union' speech, often reprinted Cooper's writings. In addition, Cooper also published in *Niles' Register*, the *Southern Review*, the *Southern Literary Journal*, and the *Carolina Law Journal*.¹⁷⁶

Concerning Cooper's proslavery opinions, historian Michael O'Brien sees no connection between Britain and South Carolina: "What did differ was Cooper's debut as a proslavery thinker. Here the gulf between Manchester and Columbia was immense." He then discusses Cooper's early views on slavery and the slave trade from the 1780s, then, by way of contrast, summarizes Cooper's later arguments in favor of slavery. It is true that Cooper later altered his proslavery position from where it stood in the late 1780s. He remained consistent, however, in the perennial concern for the poor that he developed in

¹⁷⁶ Platte, "Thomas Cooper Controversy," 19.

Britain and applied to his defense of slavery. For Cooper, espousing proslavery beliefs was a logical development of the person he had always been, not a radical change from his previous thought.¹⁷⁷

A. Slavery as Alternative to Great Britain's Free Labor Abuse

Memories of Britain were ever present in Cooper's proslavery arguments. Cooper wrote a book review of a recent novel, *The Young Duke*, for the *Southern Review* in 1831. His students, Columbia's citizens, and literate persons all over the South would have had access to the journal. Cooper used the book under review, which demonstrated the luxury and utter wastefulness of aristocratic British society, as a springboard to discuss his memories of the misery present in the lives of the British poor. Cooper laid the blame for the situation at the door of the rich. "There is the usual tone of affected familiarity with the finery, the luxury, the gormandise, and the various forms of extravagance and dissipation of persons of fashion in England," he concluded. "No honest observer [which he had been as a British subject] can doubt for a moment that it is the natural, necessary result of exorbitant wealth, enabling its possessor to indulge habitually in practices the most reprehensible, and to set at open defiance the opinion of every part of the public but that which belongs to...the fashionable world." Cooper stated that primogeniture, which kept huge sums in few hands, and the British requirement of complete idleness for the nobility, were partly to blame for this unfortunate state of affairs. Taxation supplied much

¹⁷⁷ O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 823, 897-899, 900-901. Through brief, oblique hints concerning Cooper's British influence, O'Brien leaves the subject open for a closer treatment by another historian. In his discussion of Southern political economy, O'Brien writes, "Cooper reasoned like a parvenu with a memory. 'Monopolists are rich and influential – who speaks for the Poor?' is a Cooper question...a question rooted more in Cooper's memory of Manchester than his experience of Columbia." Establishing Cooper's preference for "the moral and empirical superiority of agriculture over manufacturing", O'Brien further remarks, "Cooper knew well enough that industry could breed unemployment, misery, and starvation...Manufacturing made great wealth, employment, and stimulated a more imaginative agriculture, but it also destroyed independence and health, made wars, misery, and unemployment, and made men the instruments of an industrial oligopoly."

of the nobility's money. "This taxation is contrived to bear heaviest on the poor, as all indirect taxation is sure to do; for to be productive, it must be laid upon articles of the most extensive and most inevitable consumption...the taxation of the many for the benefit of the few."¹⁷⁸

The main evil, however, was that millions of poor were being used to make this extravagant lifestyle of the rich possible. "There are noblemen, whose incomes approach to 1000 pounds sterling per day; there are at least three millions of human beings, whose labour contributes to support and supply these incomes, unable to count with certainty upon their next day's meager meal; and who live upon a very scanty portion of the common necessities of life," Cooper wrote indignantly. Referring to the situation of cotton manufacturers as related in a recent pamphlet, Cooper verified some facts and questioned others by affirming his own eyewitness knowledge of the situation. "His observations have principally in view the cotton manufacture, as it exists in the towns of Manchester, Bolton, Blackburn, Rochdale, Stockport, &c.; places, which as seats of the cotton manufacture of Lancashire, are to ourselves [i.e. Cooper], personally well known, from frequent and ocular observation of the manufactories in all the places above enumerated." Cooper well remembered the conditions of the operatives he had daily witnessed in the area where he had practiced law for fifteen years.¹⁷⁹

While Cooper urged immediate rectification of a society in which the many "labouring beyond their strength to earn not more than £40...a year," and the few who possessed tens or even hundreds of thousands a year, he made it clear that he did not want socialism or communism: "[N]o one will suspect this review of advocating an equal

¹⁷⁸ Cooper, "Distribution of Wealth," 171-172.

¹⁷⁹ Cooper, "Distribution of Wealth," 172-173.

distribution of property...The equality of to-day, would end with the day, and a new distribution must take place on the morrow.” Cooper also did not “fight against the laws of nature, which assign universally, a greater share of the good things of this life, to superior ability, energy, knowledge, and persevering industry.” The view, however, of his old enemy, MP Edmund Burke, who claimed that the poor needed to accept this life’s inequities and console themselves with thoughts of the life to come, was an unfeeling position. At the very least, possessors of large fortunes should fund improvements that benefitted the whole community, rather than building ridiculously extravagant palaces, which were “offensive to the eye of a republican,” Cooper explained. “It is impossible to abolish poverty; but it may be lessened, and lightened, and reduced to comparative poverty only, by the regulations of society.” Income taxes would help to rectify the matter, as opposed to taxes on consumer goods, which targeted the lower classes.¹⁸⁰

After discussing his recollections of British poverty in his “Distribution of Wealth” review, Cooper compared the manufacturing system of Britain unfavorably with the paternalist slave society of South Carolina. In contrast to the toils of a British factory worker, the work “of a negro in South Carolina is mere child’s play; for where is there in South-Carolina a field negro on a cotton plantation whose day’s work cannot be finished, if he chuses it, by 2 o’clock in the day?” Cooper admitted, “There may be occasional exceptions among us, but this is the general case.” He concluded that “[i]f cheapness of manufactured produce, is thus to be purchased by such incessant wear and tear of body and mind, among the operatives who thus earn the means of dragging on a wearisome existence from day to day, it is dearly purchased.”¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Cooper, “Distribution of Wealth,” 179-180, 190.

¹⁸¹ Cooper, “Distribution of Wealth,” 175.

He poked an accusing finger at British and Northern abolitionists, who stood at the South's throat; "The pamphlet in question, ought to put an end to the complaints against negro slavery when urged by the favourers of *white slavery* [italics mine], such as we find described among the manufacturing operatives of Great Britain." Cooper verified the conditions of the factory workers: "[W]e know of our own knowledge, that the description is true to the life, without exaggeration." His review served as a warning to the Southern elite; they must look to the preservation of their society, as the Western world lay in wait at their door.¹⁸²

B. Proslavery Argument against Abolitionist Doctrines

Considering slavery not only a matter of humanitarianism, but also a matter of Southern survival, Cooper wrote harshly against the burgeoning Northern abolition movement that he judged a mortal Southern enemy. In 1837, during Preston's Senate career, Cooper sent a letter of advice and apprised him of political events at home. "We want to call an anti abolition meeting of Richland...Orangeburgh, and Lexington. The Division of Opinion among the Slave States, paralyses us. You who are on the Spot, can probably advise us what tone our resolutions ought in point of prudence to take. We are ready and willing to go all lengths, and cut the knot if needful; and quickly too," the inveterate secessionist wrote his old anti-tariff colleague. "We think we can depend on being followed by Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. If so, I wd cut cables and steer away." Eagerly, Cooper requested, "Send us your instant opinion, how far we may prudently venture." Although he was nearly eighty, Cooper felt so much concern about the abolitionist threat that he organized a tri-county meeting to fight it.¹⁸³

¹⁸² Cooper, "Distribution of Wealth," 175.

¹⁸³ Cooper to Preston, Columbia, Dec. 31, 1837, Miscellaneous MSS Collection, HEH.

In an essay called “Slavery” that Cooper wrote in 1835 for the *Southern Literary Journal*, he stated his conviction that abolition damaged the North as much as it did the South. Agreeing with a recent ruling, he explained that a New Yorker who published pamphlets in that state “to excite discontent and insurrection among the slaves” of South Carolina should be legally culpable in New York for disturbing the peace between two sections of a nation. He cited a recent case in which Britain ruled that a group could not incite American hostility, because the two nations were on friendly terms, and desired to remain so. These English cases, Cooper declared, ought to “apply to the proceedings of [abolitionists] Garrison, Tappan, and others; which are manifestly calculated to excite hostility between two nations [regions] in amity with each other; and united here by common ties of interest.” He complained, “Tappan is undoubtedly indictable in New-York, and he ought to be prosecuted by the authorities of that State, for New-York almost exists on the good opinion of the South.” Trade between the regions was essential to the economic well-being of each at that time.¹⁸⁴

He continued with a list of reasons that abolitionists found fault with slavery and systematically composed a refutation for each in turn. To the charge that slavery contradicted religious teaching, he reminded his readers that Old Testament Jews and New Testament Christians practiced it. “Messrs. Garrison, Thompson, Tappan & Co. may be humble holy men, but whenever it shall be the fashion to call men and things by their right names, they will be considered as dreadful liars, to say the best of them,” he denounced the well-known abolitionist leaders.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Cooper, “Slavery,” in the *Southern Literary Journal*, I, November 1835, 188.

¹⁸⁵ Cooper, “Slavery,” 188.

He further argued that slavery did not violate the natural rights of man: “No two men were ever born equal to each other, or ever will be. Are they all equally strong, equally talented, born to equal pretensions and chances? If nature has ordained inferiority, that inferiority will tell its own story throughout life.” Throughout history, he stated, “the black race has been inferior to, and held in bondage by the white race. Inferiority of animal caste is the great and universal basis and defence [sic] of subjugation.” He blamed Africans for starting the institution of slavery; “the black nations have universally practiced, adopted, legalized, enforced domestic slavery among each other: and this, their own practice, legalized from time immemorial...is the origin and foundation of domestic slavery...among the whites.”¹⁸⁶

As a longtime friend of Jefferson, Cooper explained his opinion that slavery was not against “the doctrines of our Declaration of Independence.” He queried, “Did that Declaration contemplate the black race? Did Mr. Jefferson, the slave holder, mean to say that the blacks were born free and equal to the whites...Are they equal in intellect, or civil rights?” Cooper had already declared blacks unequal mentally, and, at this time, they certainly possessed no civil rights in the South and precious few elsewhere. In the same vein, he denied that slavery stood against “the precepts of natural law”: “At what period in the history of the world has the system of domestic slavery been out of use, where it has been found useful and convenient to adopt it? It is fitted for some people and some climates, and there it prevails; it is unfitted for other, and there it has been dispensed with.” He contemplated the South and the North, respectively, in this declaration. In symmetry with his utilitarian beliefs, he stated that slavery “must ultimately be resolved,

¹⁸⁶ Cooper, “Slavery,” 188-189.

like all other questions relating to the social state of man, into expedience. Is it productive?”¹⁸⁷

Cooper proffered the explanation that the system had been purged “of cruelty, tyranny and injustice” through the paternalistic care of Southern masters. At one time, it possessed far more flaws, he explained, and this view aligned with his indictments on slavery and the slave trade forty years earlier. “[T]hese evils are...in the regular course of being remedied by good laws and good feelings,” Cooper exulted. Thornwell would later praise the laws that regulated slavery and the ethos of the paternalistic system, just as his professor Cooper had done. Cooper used the example that civil government itself possessed evil, but that the United States had improved, and strove to further refine, the system. “And so it is with domestic servitude. Contending partisans are not allowed, in fair discussion, to argue against an improveable [sic] system merely from its past or present abuses. Make laws to amend it, as you do in other cases; and greatly indeed within these twenty-five years has the system of domestic slavery been amended among us. This therefore is no more an argument against the government of slaves, than against the government of white men.” Cooper praised the monetary benefits he saw in the system: “The more comfortable a slave is, in every essential particular, the more valuable he is to his owner.” He then blamed the abolitionists for limiting the full expression of paternalism: “We were going on gradually to check the evils attendant on our system, and, for our own sakes, to ameliorate the condition of our slaves, but the plans of these abolitionists will render it necessary to draw the cords of subjugation tighter instead of

¹⁸⁷ Cooper, “Slavery,” 188-189.

relaxing them.” Paternalism would still be practiced, but the abolitionist influence would increase the danger of revolt and result in greater vigilance on the part of masters.¹⁸⁸

Denying the Northern concept that slave “punishments...are arbitrary and discretionary,” Cooper again invoked Britain in his rebuttal. “Not so in South-Carolina, except a few strokes with a whip on the back of an idler. The freeholders’ court assesses punishment. As to the occasional correction on a plantation, it will never intentionally go beyond moderate correction, for if it disables the slave from working, it is the master’s own loss.” In addition to practicality, humanity was involved, Cooper argued: “Who ever heard upon a plantation, of punishments like the flogging of soldiers in the British army, even to 1000 lashes? Would any South-Carolina Planter, venture to order even 100 lashes with a cat o’ nine tails for any offence? I am firmly persuaded not. He would be cried down,” Cooper asserted triumphantly. As a man who habitually reasoned out his own decisions through careful logic, he was not quick to realize that many a human owner would react from anger and some would even prefer cruelty over their own financial advantage.¹⁸⁹

To the statement that slavery allowed “the separation of husbands and wives, and parents and children,” Cooper once again invoked his European experiences: “Is not this the case with every army in Europe?” He wondered, sarcastically, in which nation it was that “husbands and wives, and parents and children, are not liable to frequent separation for long periods, and often for life?” Cooper stated that this was infrequent in slavery: “Such a case may occur occasionally in the South; but, for the most part, husbands and wives are not parted [but] sold in the neighborhood of each other, and the sales have this

¹⁸⁸ Cooper, “Slavery,” 188-190.

¹⁸⁹ Cooper, “Slavery,” 189-190.

in view, in nine cases out of ten. Actual separation occurs, perhaps, as often among the whites as the blacks, from causes that can hardly be foreseen or prevented.” Cooper stated that a law might be made in the future against this occurrence, “but the evil is so rare, that none such has yet been made.” Cooper demonstrated his feelings of biological difference: “The feelings of this kind among the blacks, are greatly overrated by those who theorize on them, as if they were all well educated sentimental whites. Such objectors do not know, or see, or allow for the very slight bonds of concubinage among the black race.” Despite the fact that Cooper used this argument, he liberated not only his favorite slave Sancho on his death, but also his wife, showing respect for their relationship.¹⁹⁰

In rebuttal to the abolitionist concept that slaves “have no chance of bettering their condition,” Cooper related his personal observations. In the South, Cooper stated, “[I]f they have behaved well, they are emancipated. But they do not care for, or expect, or look to bettering their condition.” He used the examples of Philadelphia and New York City’s blacks to explain his view of Africans’ biological bent: “Who that knows them, will say that the free blacks of Philadelphia and New-York, have bettered their conditions?” Cooper continued, “I have known the blacks of Philadelphia...They have had...every source of education open to them. Has one of them emerged from the level of his black caste? What multitudes of poor whites have elevated themselves in that state [Pennsylvania] during that time[?]” Cooper asked rhetorically.¹⁹¹

Again, he utilized British examples to educate the Southern elite: “Look at the operatives in the factory system of England, and among the manufactories generally, or

¹⁹⁰ Cooper, “Slavery,” 189-190.

¹⁹¹ Cooper, “Slavery,” 189-190, 192.

the servants put out to farmers in England under the present poor laws. To talk of people bettering their condition, who are condemned for life to at least twice the labor of our slaves, and to the workhouse when they can work no longer – to hear of the dreadful condition of our black slaves in this respect, who know, or ought to know the condition of the white slaves in Europe, is neither more nor less than to listen to gross and wild misrepresentation.” Cooper, after his thirty-five years in Britain, had concluded that slavery was not confined to the South, and that white wage slaves suffered under disinterested capitalistic employers who had no interest in paternalism.¹⁹²

In contrast to his eyewitness knowledge, Cooper believed that “all these [abolitionist] representations and misrepresentations, are made by persons who know little about the matter; and who write, to indulge a talent and propensity for exclamation and declamation, without any pretence to accurate knowledge of facts, or any care whether the facts they relate are accurate or exaggerated.” This indictment of the abolitionists bore remarkable similarity to the opinions of his friend Preston, his acquaintance Lieber, and his student Thornwell. “[Their] aim and progress is to make converts among fanatical men, and weak headed women. This is a branch of their vocation, and the acquisition of money is at the bottom of it.” Cooper was suspicious that abolitionists were gathering large sums to propagate their cause.¹⁹³

Cooper boasted of the Southern elite, his devoted friends and allies: “It is impossible to make [antislavery] converts of the planters, who know, and feel the ignorant and willful exaggerations with which the subject is treated by these self-elected saints and reformers.” Proclaiming his own personal experiences in Britain an

¹⁹² Cooper, “Slavery,” 189-190.

¹⁹³ Cooper, “Slavery,” 190-191.

insuperable qualification, he declared, “Nor will any reasonable man, who has had an opportunity of comparing the condition of the lower classes in England and Ireland generally, with that of the slaves on a southern plantation, hesitate for one moment to acknowledge that the necessaries of life, nutritious food, clothing, protection from the weather, firing, and attendance in sickness, are dealt out in far more liberal abundance to our slaves, than they can be earned in Europe by twice the labor a planter exacts.” Pointing to population figures, Cooper advised, “Look at the census of the United States, and you will find the slaves increase yearly, by natural propagation, and more than double in thirty years. From whatever State the slaves come, who have been brought into South-Carolina, they have increased to a surplus in the State that supplied them.” Cooper firmly felt that “[i]f they were not well treated, they would not increase.”¹⁹⁴

In response to the abolitionists’ statement that “[t]he Northern States are more flourishing, more wealthy, better improved, and have all the marks of civilization in more abundance than the South,” Cooper furiously agreed: “Granted. Three-fourths of the exports of the country are supplied by the slave-labor of the South. Three fourths of the importations from Europe, are for the South. The Northern merchants are the factors, the agents, for the South; they are the middle-men between Europe who sells, and the South who buys. Like all middle-men, they have grown wealthy at the expense of their customers, the consumers.” The fact that the North possessed greater wealth, Cooper insisted, was entirely to its discredit: “The Northern merchants have a double profit: a profit on the sale of tobacco, rice, and cotton, and a profit on the imports received in return. Abolish slavery in the South, and you cut away the supports of the whole Northern edifice. You deprive them of the agency on sixty millions of exports, and the

¹⁹⁴ Cooper, “Slavery,” 191.

profits.” Unfortunately, to Cooper, “These vast improvements, these marks of superior civilization at the North, have sprung up, are maintained by, depend upon, *slave labor*, directed by Southern care and industry.” To him, the South kept the nation afloat, while the North behaved as a parasite.¹⁹⁵

Cooper maintained that the abolitionists themselves held the responsibility for the cracks in the bonds of union. “Should these abolitionists continue their annoyances, unrepressed by the North, it will be the bounden duty of the South to say, we will cut away the pretence for Northern interference by abandoning a connection abused by the North.” Cooper declared, “It will come to this, at last, and in no long time. Let it, if it so pleases the North, who may then boast, if they see fit, of their superior civilization.” This would indeed occur at the end of the Civil War, when the North would emerge as the richest and strongest nation on earth.¹⁹⁶

In turn, Cooper avowed that the South required slavery to survive economically: “A planter lives by the labor of his slaves: he must therefore keep them in a condition fit to labor. His improvements depend on the increase of the slaves, for none are imported: he must enable them therefore so to live as to afford him an increase.” Although Cooper discussed this from the view of planter survival, he saw these beliefs as both humanitarian and economic in motive: “He [the master] must therefore feed them, with plenty of wholesome food, though plain. He must keep them warm and comfortable by clothes sufficient for the purpose. When sick, he must find them able medical attendance, for he cannot afford to let a slave, worth \$500, die for want of care when sick.” British manufacturers, when one of their operatives died, could easily hire another one in his

¹⁹⁵ Cooper, “Slavery,” 191.

¹⁹⁶ Cooper, “Slavery,” 191.

place. “He [the planter] must support their wives, and rear their children.” Cooper found this provision far superior to the situation of the children who suffered and grew deformed in British factories. “Every substantial want and comfort of life must be, and is provided for them: they take no thought for the morrow: they are under none of the heart rending anxieties that accompany the white man’s poverty, who, when nearly starved, is scantily supplied by a grumbling [manufacturer], and who dies neglected and uncared for; why? Because he is a loss to no one.” In contrast to the loss of a free worker in capitalistic manufacturing, “[t]he death of a slave is a serious loss to the master.” Cooper believed that when planters made economic decisions that were positive for them, it also benefitted their slaves. “All the animal wants of a slave are supplied in sufficient plenty to support health and strength; and he has no sentimental wants that require supply.” Cooper dared the abolitionists and the Northerners: “Compare his condition with that of the starving poor in our parent island, and say, *if you can with truth*, that our slaves are not better off.”¹⁹⁷

Feeling assured in his firsthand knowledge, Cooper further declared in his “Slavery” essay, “Nor can the great masses of the poor in England or Ireland change their condition. Their scanty earnings enable them to live but from day to day, and they are as absolute slaves to their masters, as a negro on a plantation.” Cooper then compared the North to Britain: “Why is there an outcry for the ballot box in England? Are the whites not so in the factories here? I read in the papers, that at General Jackson’s first election, the operatives at Lowell or Waltham, or both, were compelled to give in their votes on printed calico, that their masters might be sure they voted according to order.” He concluded, “I say then, that the system of domestic slavery is a better system for the black

¹⁹⁷ Cooper, “Slavery,” 191-192.

population in the South, than the falsely and fraudulently called free-labor system of the old country, for the wretched pauper population who drag out their miserable existence there. If the abolitionists were not something worse than purblind observers, they would see, and know, and acknowledge this.” If the abolitionists had resided in Britain for years as he had, they would have better sense, Cooper thought.¹⁹⁸

In a letter to Mahlon Dickerson, Cooper discussed the 1820s situation in Cuba and the Caribbean. “If Cuba should be placed in a revolutionary State, it will at present be a black government, and the people of Cuba joined to the rascally tribe of Wilberforce’s evangelical reformers, will surrender all the british west indies [sic] into the hands of the blacks.” His opinion of Wilberforce is quite comparable to Thornwell and Preston’s opinion of Daniel O’Connell and Lieber’s opinion of Wendell Phillips. This quote also emphasizes Cooper’s fear of revolt and belief that blacks should be supervised by white elites to avoid uprisings. “I do not say that blacks are a distinct species: but I have not the slightest doubt of their being an inferior variety of the human species; and not capable of the same improvement as the whites.” This placed Cooper somewhere between the polygenesis of Lieber and the monogenesis of Thornwell’s Christian beliefs.¹⁹⁹

C. Belief in Biological Racial Inequality

Cooper continued his discussion of inequality in his 1834 textbook, *A Manual of Political Economy*. The professor espoused the idea that a natural power hierarchy existed: “The saying that every man is born free and equal to every other...has done much harm,” he asserted. “No human being ever was or ever will be born free, or live free from the control of his fellow men. No set of men, from six hundred to six millions,

¹⁹⁸ Cooper, “Slavery,” 192.

¹⁹⁹ Cooper to Mahlon Dickerson, Columbia, March 16, 1826, in “Letters of Dr. Cooper, 1825-1832,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Jul., 1901).

were ever born equal in size, in strength, in health, in natural intellect and capacity for improvement. And if they were, the variety of circumstances to which they are exposed from their birth, will produce inequality from the very first month of their existence,” Cooper opined. “Even their equality of rights is conventional. The natural foundation of right is power...It is power that renders the human being the commander of the brute, the male of the female, the man of the child, the strong of the weak, the wise of the ignorant.” This declaration, which used the era’s concept of natural hierarchy to justify the master-slave relation, is quite similar to Thornwell’s order of society.²⁰⁰

Appealing to biological science to further explain why he believed slavery to be necessary for blacks’ best interest, he mused, “The blacks may be of the same species, for the mixed progeny will breed. But they are of an inferior variety of the animal, man.” Citing well-known scientists of his day in an article he published in 1836 entitled “On Phrenology, Craniology, and Organology” for the *Southern Literary Journal*, he explained that the observer “will find the mass of brains *behind* in the black, and *before* in the white. Take the facial angle of 70 and 75 degrees in the black, and 85 in the generality of whites.” In addition to his concepts of biological physical inferiority, he invoked his view of African continental inferiority: “Look at Africa for 3000 years back. Has its population ever been on a par with the white race?” he asked. “What but a natural [biological] inferiority can have given rise to the actual inferiority of 3000 years, continuing down to the present moment?” Mocking the abolitionists, he said, “During all this period, [Africans] have constantly made slaves of each other: what right then have

²⁰⁰ Cooper, *Manual of Political Economy*, 104-105.

they to complain of slavery? And if they have no right to complain themselves, who has a right to complain for them?”²⁰¹

This type of diatribe was common with Cooper. Extending his gaze from Europe itself to their formal colonial holdings in the West Indies in his 1835 “Slavery” essay, he pointed to the black population on the island of Hispaniola as proof of his belief that slaves were naturally lazy. “The blacks will not labor voluntarily. Left to themselves, their numbers increase but slowly.” He continued, “Look at and compare Hayti with St. Domingo. I need say no more to prove that a free black country is an impoverished country.” Haiti had revolted in the 1790s; Britain had freed all her West Indian slaves in 1834, the year before Cooper’s essay. “Such as Hayti is, such will the British West Indies be in a dozen years. The symptoms are too plain to admit of doubt,” he analyzed. The proslavery author then contended that blacks were happier and more advanced in the South than in their African homeland. “Look at the cultivation of Africa – the mud houses of Timbuctoo and Houssa,” he wrote with sharp sarcasm, “and in what is the black population of Africa, superior to the beasts of the field?”²⁰²

In his mind, blacks’ biological inferiority denied them the right of citizenship. In 1823, Cooper wrote a piece for the *Charleston Mercury* on “Coloured Marriages,” which appeared in the *Carolina Law Journal* in 1830. The Carolinian was displeased by a Supreme Court judge’s recent statement that marriage contracts between whites and free blacks were legal. In addition to disagreeing with the statement, Cooper resented the encroachment of the court on the states’ domain. “A Slave can make no contract; a slave therefore cannot contract a marriage with a free person,” Cooper declared. “Can a white

²⁰¹ Cooper, “Slavery,” 192-193; Cooper, “On Phrenology, Craniology, and Organology,” *Southern Literary Journal*, Feb. 1836, 402.

²⁰² Cooper, “Slavery,” 193.

man marry a [free] coloured woman, or a white woman a [free] coloured man?" In France, interracial marriage was not permitted; color difference or a former "servile condition" of one of the parties indicated concubinage rather than legal marriage. In the old system of serfdom in England, concubinage could exist between a villein and a free person, but not marriage, Cooper recounted: "The essential quality, of equality of status, was wanting; which constitutes the difference between legalized concubinage and marriage." Although he almost always cited European practices as negative examples, for this argument he chose instead to cite their laws against mixed race relationships being granted legal marriage status to buttress his case. As marriage "is a contract formed with a view not only to the benefit of the parties themselves, but to the benefit of third parties, to the benefit of their common offspring, and to the moral order of civil society," Cooper believed that mixed race marriages should be forbidden.²⁰³

In judging the case, Cooper asserted his views on the implications of color: "They are *every where* subject to laws and restrictions that do not operate on the white population; and those restrictions may be remitted or extended according to temporary circumstances of expediency, at the pleasure of the whites." This regulation kept the enslaved Southern working class in bounds, so that it could not rise up into a mobocracy as the French had in the Revolution and threaten the white elites.²⁰⁴

He warned that the white race would be slowly corrupted by intermarriage with blacks. "Is it an offence against public decorum for a black or mulatto person to marry a white, or a white to marry a black or mulatto?" he queried. "The feeling on this subject is

²⁰³ Cooper, "Coloured Marriages," in *Carolina Law Journal*, vol. 1, A. Blanding and D.J. McCord, eds. (Columbia: Times and Gazette Office, 1831), 92-95. The essay originally appeared in the *Charleston Mercury* on Oct. 29, 1823.

²⁰⁴ Cooper, "Coloured Marriages," 98.

universal,” he boasted: “A white person so acting would be considered as degraded in society without a dissenting voice. Such a union is a sure means of propagating among us personal deformity, more or less, as the offspring partakes of similitude to the black ancestor.” He particularly felt that “the features, the complexion, and the corporeal differences constitute an inferiority in the person of such a progeny.” Blacks, he asserted, “are not capable of much mental improvement, or of literary or scientific acquirement.” He avowed, “It is therefore a clear breach of public expedience and decorum knowingly to propagate inferiority of mind as well as body.” Ironically enough, some of Cooper’s friends and associates, although not legally married to black women, were “propagating” this supposed “inferiority of mind as well as body” with their female slaves.²⁰⁵

He questioned whether even concubinage might well be invalid because “coloured persons among us, are not legally persons, but property. A coloured man is not the less a species of property, although he be not the property of any particular person. His status consists in being property; so regarded by the laws; and dependent on the differences which nature has ordained.” South Carolina law required that even free blacks have the supervision of a white guardian. Having thus dispensed with the citizenship of the black man, Cooper continued on to the black woman. “Suppose a free white married to a negro; how is he to protect her person from outrage?” This was one of the Southern husband’s biggest responsibilities to his wife. “How can he be assured of his progeny; if his wife cannot complain of force with any effect? But among the most important objects of matrimony to the individual is this certainty, that his children are his own.” Cooper touched on another fixation of the South – a man’s marrying for legitimate offspring.

²⁰⁵ Cooper, “Coloured Marriages,” 99-100.

Children from other unions, such as with female slaves, would not be recognized, legally or even socially.²⁰⁶

Southern society and jurisprudence decreed that the husband was in effect the “master” of his white wife. Marriage to a black woman might well jeopardize not only a white man’s conjugal rights, but also his authority as the leading member of the community and the state. “Under such a marriage contract,” Cooper wrote, “the guardian of the colored woman and the husband may be two different persons...Her person, therefore, is not like that of a white woman under the control of her husband.” Cooper’s conclusion against the legal or social viability of mixed marriage was driven by his belief that blacks were biologically inferior as well as his desire to protect Southern institutions, particularly the master’s rule over his black and white household. This legal opinion influenced many elite individuals who continued to read the Manchester attorney’s case study for decades.²⁰⁷

D. Southern Social Safety in Slavery and Social Superiority to the North

The belief that blacks were biologically inferior was to Cooper a logical rationale for the concept that the male white elite had the responsibility to protect and control his slaves. He boldly declared in 1835, “I say then, that under the domestic servitude system of the Southern States at the present day, the blacks have more enjoyment of life than if they were free.” In addition to humanitarian considerations, sociopolitical advantages also existed: “[T]he paucity of crime among the [Southern] blacks, compared to the lower class of the white population to the North, is remarkable.” He pointed Northern persons in denial to the official records to prove his point. “They are kept in more strict discipline

²⁰⁶ Cooper, “Coloured Marriages,” 103.

²⁰⁷ Cooper, “Coloured Marriages,” 103.

and subordination among us, than the poorer whites can be in the North. Neither is there the same temptation to crime among them” as there was among persons who lacked the necessaries of life. “They are well, though coarsely fed and cloathed. They never suffer from hunger; nor do their families. They are habitually a more contented race, and a more merry, and a more happy one.” The Carolinian extended his assessment of British misery, at least in part, to the North.²⁰⁸

Cooper then referenced the influence of France, which had pitted him against democracy, and his desire to preserve the South as a republic ruled by the elite: “We can admit without danger, universal suffrage among the whites of the Southern States [, a] system that will occasion sooner or later a revolution in the North. Nor is property perfectly safe there, where the laws may be made by men who possess none.” He believed that, first, similarities between the misery of Britain’s manufacturing society and the Northern working class would occur; next, total upheaval, like the French Revolution, would arrive. “All this is even now too plain to be denied. In the South,” he boasted, “we have no such fears. Nor have we in the South, those *mobs and riots* among the lower classes of the community too numerous to be controlled, that have of late been so common in the North.” Undoubtedly, this was *déjà vu* for Cooper. “Our black laboring population have neither the temptation nor the power to become rioters,” he exulted; “Even if they had the power, they have no inciting causes of discontent.” Food, clothing, and a fatherly master prevented revolt. “We are far safer in the Southern States as to our blacks, than the men of property in the North are, in respect of their lower classes of whites.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Cooper, “Slavery,” 193.

²⁰⁹ Cooper, “Slavery,” 193.

Cooper bragged of Southerners' superior power: "We are a *more powerful people* compared to numbers, in the South." The Northern population figured nearly twice that of the South, but Cooper believed that Southern males possessed more strength individually than Yankee shopkeepers. He eerily prophesied, "The whole white population may become soldiers." Indeed they would; this number would include the majority of the young men Cooper trained in his fourteen years as SCC college professor. Due to slave labor, Cooper believed in error, "agriculture and production will not suffer from a state of war." On account of abolition, "In the North, the soldiery must be raised from among the [free white] laboring classes, and production suffers in proportion." He did not realize that the Northern population would provide sufficient numbers of laboring men for armies, agriculture, and manufactures, while in the South, all white men would be soldiers and slaves would either run away or lack management for agricultural endeavors. Cooper, instead, proclaimed Southern ability to withstand Northern advances.²¹⁰

VI. Cooper's Political Involvement

Interestingly, Daniel Kilbride contends that Cooper did not influence "southern intellectuals" with his utilitarian ideas. Evidence strongly indicates, however, that Cooper's influence was felt to a substantial degree in antebellum South Carolina and in the region as a whole. In addition, Kilbride also believes that Cooper did not link his arguments and views on slavery and nullification: "But the crux of his sectional proslavery argument lay in a comparison of the sections' respective social and labor systems, an analysis that was not part of his nullification rationale." Here, Kilbride over-

²¹⁰ Cooper, "Slavery," 193.

reaches not least because Cooper's nullification and anti-tariff arguments directly linked to his desire to avoid the fate of Britain and, in lesser measure, the North.²¹¹

Cooper's leadership role in South Carolina's tariff opposition in 1828 and nullification and secession threat in 1832 stood at least equal to Calhoun's efforts. Historian Elbert Vaughan Wells wrote in 1917, "Dr. Cooper was a personage of great influence in the determination of the policies of South Carolina and the Southern States in general." Moreover, "his lectures delivered in connection with his professorship in South Carolina College, are difficult to over-estimate[, r]eaching...young men who were destined to assume positions of leadership [and take] their share in crystallizing opposition to the interference of the national government in State affairs." The many individuals who listened to Cooper's State House speeches frequently altered their opinions in his favor: "Dr. Cooper's direct influence may be traced in a circle far wider than that with which he came in contact as a professor, and as a writer. Energetic denunciation of the measures which he opposed characterized his popular addresses." Cooper's anti-tariff beliefs stemmed directly from his observation of British economic disaster. In fact, the tariff issue was a more discreet way of arguing for the right to slavery; states' rights would protect slavery, whereas the Northern-led federal government might well turn against it.²¹²

Michael O'Brien, in his landmark work *Conjectures of Order*, acknowledges Cooper's significant contribution to South Carolina's ideals: "Though John C. Calhoun became the political champion of what Thomas Cooper called in 1830 the 'South Carolina Doctrines,' Cooper himself had defined them in a series of pamphlets from 1823

²¹¹ Kilbride, "Slavery and Utilitarianism," 469-476, 481, 485.

²¹² Wells, "Dr. Thomas Cooper, Economist," 23.

onwards, and offered its most accessible summation in 1836; his achievement was to turn an economic into a constitutional analysis.” The Southern intellectual historian, then, credits Cooper with the anti-tariff doctrines that would place the state on the road to secession. In his analysis of Cooper’s contributions, O’Brien, oddly, denies that Cooper’s strong proslavery philosophy was the linchpin to his view of the Southern republic: “But even Cooper maintained some distance... ‘On the Constitution of the United States’ came around to [slavery] only as the most blatant instance of misuse of the Constitution, not as a starting place for considering the problem of political society.” However, in *On the Constitution*, Cooper placed slavery at the center of his rationale for sectional conflict, including a lengthy section in which he passionately listed numerous reasons why slavery should be preserved.²¹³

In that 1826 essay, Cooper gave his most powerful defense of states’ rights in both an anti-tariff and proslavery context. The professor deemed meddling with either issue as forbidden; the Constitution did not allow the federal government to levy a tariff, nor did it permit the federal government to limit slavery within any state or territory that decided to permit it. Beginning his work by recounting the sectional struggle with Missouri, Cooper decried the North’s desire to deny statehood to Missouri as a strategy to suppress slavery and gain additional free territory. The abolitionists, he complained, “were exercising their disinterested philanthropy at the expence [sic] of other people” and “prohibiting the domestic arrangements of persons, perfectly independent of them, and with whom they had nothing to do.”²¹⁴

²¹³ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 818, 823-824.

²¹⁴ Cooper, *Two Essays*, 44-45.

Cooper defended slavery to his Southern readers by arguing his conviction that slaves stood not only in a more eligible position than the laborers of other nations, but also had more necessities, comforts, and protection than they could provide for themselves independently. Cooper delivered his usual testimony from his eyewitness experiences as a former British subject: “That they are incomparably better off as to the necessaries of life, than the majority of the labouring people of Great Britain have been for many years past, or now are.” He then pointed a finger at the North’s free black population: “That a population of free blacks, is the most idle, debauched, thievish and insolent that we have ever witnessed in the United States.” This was yet another proof in Cooper’s mind that freeing the slaves would create an impoverished, rioting South, similar to the British society that the North was imitating. Cooper declared that free blacks had failed to improve themselves: “in New York and Pennsylvania...the encouragements and advantages afforded them, have been held out in vain.” Remembering his years in the North, he stated, “This is testified by hourly observation, as well as by the state of the Jails in those cities; and the continual complaints against their coloured population.”²¹⁵

By utilizing the era’s argument that climate conditions in the South necessitated the use of slave labor, Cooper assured his readers, particularly Northern ones, that the institution was absolutely necessary to Southern economic survival. “That, although the climates of the Northern and Middle States, would admit of the lands being cultivated by free white men, it is not so with much of the lands of Louisiana, or with the low lands for 100 miles from the seacoast of the Carolinas and Georgia, where the whites die, and the blacks encrease [sic] and multiply.” In Cooper’s opinion, since whites could not labor in

²¹⁵ Cooper, *Two Essays*, 45.

some of the most fertile regions of the South, slavery must remain a part of the social fabric.²¹⁶

He then declared to his readers that the South supported the nation, not the North as many assumed: “[A]lthough there may be more ostensible improvement in the States where slavery is forbidden, yet the commerce and prosperity of the Northern States depend mainly on the productive industry of the South. Of 75 millions of exports in 1828, 47½ [million] consisted of domestic produce: of which 28,449,177 consisted of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice.” In addition to raising national profits, these Southern exports were “giving employment to the shipping of the Northern States, from whom the Southern purchase nearly all their consumption of imported articles.” Cooper thus argued that the “question [of Southern survival] therefore is of more moment to the Northern than the Southern States. Moreover, a reference...will shew [sic] that the productive industry of South Carolina and Georgia per head of the population, is at least three times greater in amount than that of the Northern States.”²¹⁷

Cooper explained to his readers that the North would suffer at least equally with the South if the institution of slavery – its method of survival – was destroyed by the federal government. This was partially due to the fact that Cooper deemed blacks naturally lazy: “That the emancipation of the Slaves, would surely convert them into idle and useless vagabonds, and thieves; as every Southern man conversant with negro habits and propensities, well knows.” Displaying his ideas of biological difference, he stated, “The first object of every negro [is] not an improvement of his condition, but a life of idleness; freedom from all kind of labour and exertion.” He then touched on the perennial

²¹⁶ Cooper, *Two Essays*, 45.

²¹⁷ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, 45-46.

Southern fear of revolt; “The consequence would inevitably be, a servile war; in which the whites or the coloured population, must be exterminated.” With the South destroyed, Cooper warned, the North would find itself in an untenable position. “Such a measure would inevitably put a stop to the prosperity of the Northern States, who cannot be insensible to the advantages resulting from a trade with the South to such an immense amount, as more than one half the whole trade of the United States in domestic articles, and the home sales...of which the South are the purchasers.”²¹⁸

William Freehling’s discussion of the tariff controversy, while placing Calhoun in a preeminent position, also strongly emphasizes Cooper’s role. He admits that Calhoun was reluctant to take charge of South Carolina’s anti-tariff movement; he did not advocate nullification or secession wholeheartedly until 1832, while Cooper was an early pioneer of the concept. Freehling refers to Calhoun as “the so-called Father of Secession,” the “alleged Father of Secession,” and “no Father of Secession,” while, in contrast, in “1831, Cooper...had marched beyond what Calhoun considered prudent extremism.” Calhoun was hesitant, while “[t]he...non-reluctant revolutionaries in South Carolina, with Professor Thomas Cooper front and center, loathed Calhoun’s non-secessionist scenarios. Cooper mightily distrusted Calhoun.” Even as late as 1835, after Calhoun had wielded great influence over the state, “the new structure of southern politics was in place. Almost all southern politicians stood behind one of four contestants: Democrats, Oppositionists, Calhounites, [and] Cooperites.” In late 1836, Calhoun hoped for reconciliation between the South and the North, but if this plan failed, he decided,

²¹⁸ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, 46.

“his convention should go through with Cooper’s disunion.” Calhoun is, for Freehling, “Mr. South Carolina,” but this case study points to Cooper as the true “Mr. Secession.”²¹⁹

Cooper fought doggedly against the tariff; he was one of the first, if not the first, to urge South Carolina to “calculate the value of the Union” rather than submit to the Northern-led federal government, after witnessing the British situation firsthand. He feared that, while a few Northern capitalists lined their own pockets with gold, only poverty and misery would settle upon his beloved South. In his 1824 tariff denunciation, Cooper explained that England had greatly injured her economy by monopolies: “The experiment of endeavoring to make a manufacture stand by itself, after a series of support by the leading strings and go-carts of prohibitions, bounties, and drawbacks, has been tried in England, among others, with the silk, the glass, the linen, the sail cloth, the cordage, the hemp, the cotton, the woolen manufacture.” No matter how many failures occurred, the nation continued the system: “After from one to two hundred years of experiment, none of these [monopolies] pretend to dispense with Parliamentary aid; which continues to be afforded without diminution, and with increase after increase, even to the present day: nor will they dispense with it: the tax on the consumer will probably continue till manufacturers and purchasers are no more.” Cooper predicted that, with such a foolish arrangement, eventually no one would have money to purchase goods, and Britain’s economic system would have spent itself.²²⁰

Proffering examples that demonstrated his firm Jeffersonian agriculture-based economic philosophy, he stated, “[T]he silk trade of England would have been prostrated

²¹⁹ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, vol.1, 275-276, 282, 305, 320, 337-338.

²²⁰ Cooper, *On the Proposed Alterations of the Tariff, Submitted to the Consideration of the Members of South-Carolina, in the Ensuing Congress of 1823-1824*, 3rd ed. (Columbia: Printed by Black and Kean, 1824), 11, 23.

by the cotton trade, if Parliament had not taxed the people to keep it alive.” Once again, the British government had taken from the poor in order to stubbornly implement their economic system. “I remember when it was dangerous to walk the streets with any but a metal button to your coat, the button trade being in jeopardy from covered buttons,” he spoke ruefully of his days as a British subject. The livelihood of many individuals depended upon fashion trends, Cooper testified: “I remember [buckle manufacturers sending] petition upon petition to the Prince of Wales, to beg his highness would wear buckles to his shoes.” All this was necessary to keeping the impractical system afloat, as it could not bring in enough income to remain solvent. “It being an axiom,” Cooper remarked dryly, “that monopolist[s] will forever continue to require monopoly.”²²¹

Cooper led the initial tariff resistance; Preston served as his right-hand man. In a meeting on July 2, 1827, chronicled in *Niles' Register*, they and a few other leading citizens petitioned the “planters, merchants, and others, inhabitants of the town of Columbia, and its vicinity” to create a committee “to devise the most efficient means to oppose the passage of the proposed [tariff] law” and its “oppressive operation on the commercial and agricultural interests.” Cooper, Preston, and the rest promised that a “meeting of delegates from the southern states,” a coalition in case secession became necessary, would soon follow the initial proceedings. The newspaper account related that Cooper, Preston, and company urged Carolinians “to take into consideration the right assumed by our national government of imposing high duties on foreign manufactures consumed among us, for the avowed purpose of encouraging and protecting domestic manufactures of the same description.” These resolutions avowed the loss of income for the agricultural states and the unconstitutional nature of the government’s decision. The

²²¹ Cooper, *On the Proposed Alterations of the Tariff*, 11, 23.

gist of the discourse, however, grew far more serious, laid the groundwork for the entire nullification and secession controversy, and, in fact, planted the seeds for the Civil War which would occur thirty-three years later.²²²

In their anti-tariff article, Cooper, Preston, and their colleagues stated that this federal aggression was “so plainly calculated to make one section of the union tributary to another, and to sacrifice without remorse the interest of the minority whenever it suits the majority to do so.” This lack of minority protection, they asserted, begged a certain question: “in what manner are the southern states benefitted by the union?” This concern continued, “And whether the most productive part of our united empire, is to serve as a sponge only, to be squeezed for the benefit of the rest?” In addition to prominent South Carolinians, many SCC students were in attendance, watching and admiring their professors’ defense of Southern rights and enjoying the spectacle.²²³

The meeting’s main feature consisted of a dramatic speech by Thomas Cooper, also reprinted in *Niles’ Register* to reach a wider audience. Discussing the agenda of the manufacturing North, Cooper declared, “[T]his is a combined attack of the whole manufacturing interest, anxious no doubt to encourage and support the agriculturalists, as the wolf promises succor to the sheep.” The professor believed that Congress planned “to sacrifice the south to the north, by converting us into colonies and tributaries – to tax us for their own emolument – to claim the right of disposing of our honest earnings – to forbid us to buy from our most valuable customers [Britain and Europe].” Cooper declared that Congress and the North wanted, “in short, to impoverish the planter, and to stretch the purse of the [modest Southern] manufacturer.” So far, “[t]he planting

²²² T. Cooper, W.C. Preston, R. Henry, A. Blanding, W.F. DeSaussure, and D.J. McCord, “Woollen’s Bill: Columbia (S.C.) Proceedings,” *Niles’ Register*, Sept. 8, 1827, 27-28.

²²³ Cooper et al., “Woollen’s Bill,” 27-28.

interest...have at length after a series of successful attacks upon them during the last ten years, become the victims of manufacturing monopoly.” He urged South Carolinians to action: “We are met to-day sir, to consider whether we ought to continue to bear the burthens imposed, and patiently submit to others that are meditated.” Cooper roused citizens to decide “whether we are to rest satisfied with a state of humiliation which we are too impotent to change...[or] expos[e] our grounds of opposition to the measures we complain of, and our determination to resist them.”²²⁴

The speaker reminded the highly flammable audience that the federal government had increased revenue and protection duties that adversely affected the South nine times since 1790, and that, as a result, the individuals in the meeting hall paid 25% of their income in taxes. The “proceedings of the last congress,” however, had just made the situation even worse and, in fact, intolerable. Little hope existed through designated representative channels; Cooper indicated that “there is a mongrel kind of lobby legislature at Washington” that adeptly arranged “the interests of the manufacturers, directing and managing the votes, as the occasion may require.” Specifically blaming a faction in Boston and underhanded businessmen who sought certain advantages for Lowell Mills, Cooper described “the manufacturers” as “a combining, club-meeting, planning, scheming, petitioning, memorializing, complaining, statement-making, worrying, teasing, boring, persevering [sic] class of men[.] Is it any matter of surprise, that they should get the better of the farmers and planters in every struggle?”²²⁵

Southern planters and farmers, many of whom lived at a distance from town, were at a decided disadvantage because they could not meet in such a concerted fashion.

²²⁴ Cooper, “Speech of Dr. Cooper” in “Woollen’s Bill,” 29.

²²⁵ Cooper, “Speech of Dr. Cooper” in “Woollen’s Bill,” 29-30.

“Hence it is, that the south is destined to bear the weight of taxes and impositions, without measure and without end,” Cooper warned Columbia’s citizens. “By and by we shall be driven to adopt some decisive measure *when the power is gone from us*. Wealth will be transferred to the north, and wealth is power.” Using imagery Southern planters well understood, Cooper stated, “Every year of submission rivets the chains upon us, and we shall go on remonstrating, complaining and reluctantly submitting, till the remedy now in power, will be looked up to in vain.”²²⁶

Cooper strongly disapproved of European government; he had witnessed its many injustices firsthand, and he sensed that the North was imitating Europe in dangerous ways. “I have always deemed that our American system was in direct hostility with the European systems: that liberty, equality, and honesty were our bonds of union, and constituted the pervading spirit of our *American* system,” the professor-politician told the throng, “[t]hat equality of rights...duties...burthens...protection [and] laws, constituted the prevailing features of our happy institutions.” Cooper now stood convinced, however, “that in the canting, cheating, cajoling slang of these monopolists, the American system, is a system, by which the earnings of the south are to be transferred to the north...by which inequality of rights...burthens...protection...laws, and...taxes are to be enacted and rendered permanent.” Cooper declared before the Southern elite, “[T]he planter and the farmer under this system, are to be considered as inferior beings to the spinner, the bleacher, and the dyer.” Using the image of slavery and serfdom to explain the South’s relationship to the North, Cooper continued, “[W]e of the south hold our plantations under this system, as the serfs and operatives of the north, subject to the orders, and laboring for the benefit of the master minds of Massachusetts, the lords of the spinning

²²⁶ Cooper, “Speech of Dr. Cooper” in “Woollen’s Bill,” 30.

jenny, and peers of the power loom! who have a right to tax our earnings for their emolument, and to burthen our poverty and to swell their riches.” Indicating that the South was, to him, the true America, he said, “To call this system of fraud, robbery and usurpation, the *American system* will sound to your ears as it does to mine, a base libel on the American character.”²²⁷

He emphasized the danger he saw in the 1827 Woolen’s Bill with his common refrain decrying Great Britain’s implementation of similar tariffs and monopolies and the suffering of the farmers and the nation at large: “The oppressive and fraudulent conduct of the woolen manufacturers of Great Britain towards the farmers of that country, is very instructive.” Since “500 years ago...the woolen manufacture has been feeding like a vampire, on the honest profit of the farmer, but interdicting him from every market but one.” He traced the history of extreme punishments for wool smuggling and unlawful sale. An area famous for its poverty, “Ireland, peculiarly from its climate, a wool growing country is prohibited from exporting any of its wool any where except G. Britain.” In fact, “three armed ships...and eight armed sloops” stood at attention “to prevent the exportation of wool from Ireland to any other country than England.” On the whole, he pitied the “oppressed and injured agriculturalists of that country [the United Kingdom].” If the South gave in to the North’s desires, the South would become a place like Great Britain where not only the factory worker, but also the farmer, struggled for sustenance. If the South submitted to the tariff, Cooper thought, they would suffer as his former homeland suffered. The South, in effect, would be enslaved to the North.²²⁸

²²⁷ Cooper, “Speech of Dr. Cooper,” in “Woollen’s Bill,” 31.

²²⁸ Cooper, “Speech of Dr. Cooper” in “Woollen’s Bill,” 31.

Cooper made what was, very likely, the first formal call to Southern secession: “I have said, that we shall ‘ere long be compelled to calculate the value of our union; and to enquire of what use to us is this most unequal alliance? By which the south has always been the loser, and the north always the gainer?” He rhetorically inquired of his audience, which included many eager college students, “Is it worth while to continue this union of states, where the north demand to be our masters and we are required to be their tributaries?” He held sway over the hearts of men who would set the course of South Carolina, Southern, and American history; both those who would set it on its course on the road to secession, and those who would begin and sustain the bloodiest war in the nation’s history. “The question, however, is fast approaching to the alternative, of submission or separation.” He acknowledged: “Most anxiously would every man who hears me wish on fair and equal terms to avoid it.” Cooper assured his listeners that the North, however, would be at fault: “if the monopolists are bent upon forcing the decision upon us,” they would bear “the responsibility.” Remedies of a less drastic nature might still prove effective. “But at all events we must hold to principle: if we compromise our *rights*, and act from motives of expediency,” Cooper warned, “we trust to a broken anchor, and all that is worth preserving will be irretrievably lost.”²²⁹

A few weeks later, Cooper spoke in the Town Hall of Columbia with a still greater audience, including the governor. He gave a nearly identical speech and again urged his neighbors to consider secession, receiving definite approval. He stated, “I consider it an honor to be the proposer of any measure calculated to promote the interest of the state to which I belong, or to ward off the attacks meditated against her prosperity.”

²²⁹ Cooper, “Speech of Dr. Cooper,” in “Woollen’s Bill,” 32.

The Columbia *Evening Post* provided a laudatory account of the meeting and a reprinting of Cooper's speech.²³⁰

Cooper exerted great influence through his writings. "My leisure time now, is occupied by writing for the *Southern Review*," he remarked in a letter in 1829. In addition, he published books with Carey, Lea, and Carey of Philadelphia, and wrote for Walsh's *American Quarterly*. "Besides this I have for two years past kept our weekly newspaper supplied with essays against the Tariff and the monopoly system." He exercised leadership over South Carolina's young minds as well: "[M]y duties as President of the College, lecturer 5 times a week in Chemistry, with very full experiments, and once in Political Economy per week...keep me tolerably well occupied." He wrote confidently, "Protection be not repealed, South Carolina and Georgia will secede from the Union toward the close of 1830. Believing that they ought so to do, both on principle, and from expedience, I shall promote the Secession (if the Tariff continues to be a Tariff of Monopoly-protection) to the utmost of my power." The fact that Cooper wielded enormous influence over the city and the college is strongly supported by William Freehling, who refers to "Thomas Cooper's Columbia" and calls the professor a "breeder of secessionists" at SCC.²³¹

Continuing his influence in the anti-tariff fight, in 1832, Cooper, with Algernon Sidney Johnston, authored a humorous allegory, *The Memoirs of a Nullifier, Written by Himself*. In the tale, a wealthy young Southerner only a few years older than Cooper's students loses all his worldly goods to Yankees – \$60,000 to a Northern lawyer, and \$20,000 in a manufacturing scheme. He sells his soul to the devil, receiving great wealth

²³⁰ "Judge Cooper's Speech" in *Evening Post*, Columbia, SC, Friday, July 27, 1827.

²³¹ Cooper to Joseph Parkes of Birmingham, England, Columbia, SC, Feb. 21, 1829, Cooper Papers, SCL; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 305, 320, 337-338.

in return for vowing never to marry. During the course of his adventures, he meets many Yankees in hell, being condemned for their avarice and greed. One even tries to take his cart of goods with him into hell but cannot due to the enormous tariff duties required by the Devil. James Hamilton, William Campbell Preston, and John C. Calhoun are extolled in the work as honorable Southerners. He marries the beautiful Laura Douglas despite the warning, lives in a lovely marble home, and is a mover and shaker in Southern politics. One day thirty years later, however, the Devil (Henry Clay) arrives – not for him, but to take Laura, who gave her soul so her husband’s could remain undisturbed. The hero buys twenty-five Yankee souls to give in exchange for Laura’s freedom, but the Devil declares that they do not have souls, only avarice, greed, and essence of onions and fish. The beautiful angel, Nullification, protects Laura, however, and the Devil runs in fear.²³²

The people of Columbia and Charleston, the two major political and cultural centers of South Carolina at that time, acknowledged Cooper’s extraordinary and long-lasting influence over their political course of action. The *Columbia Times and Gazette* published the following in 1833 on the occasion of his resignation from the college, which also appeared in the *Charleston Mercury*. The article first acknowledged that he was the father of the School of Political Economy (SCC), the Medical School (Charleston), and the Law School (SCC). “When to this is added, that the people of South Carolina owe to him the first alarm given, as to the unconstitutionality of the Tariff law, by his letter to the South Carolina delegation in Congress – the revival of the (then forgotten) doctrine of State Rights in his pamphlet entitled ‘Consolidation,’ and his continued support for eight years...of the States Rights doctrines, of which South

²³² Algernon Sidney Johnston and Cooper, *Memoirs of a Nullifier, Written By Himself* (Columbia, SC: Telescope Office, 1832).

Carolina has so much reason to be proud – when all this is considered we may fairly say, that gentleman hitherto has been a faithful servant of our State, and long may he continue to render similar services.”²³³

Conclusion

Englishman Thomas Cooper, as a result of having witnessed the miserable lives of the British poor during thirty-five years residence, embraced Southern slavery as a humane alternative to the injustices he felt were inherent in free labor. Throughout his years as an enthusiastic resident of South Carolina, he championed slavery through powerful speeches and published widely circulated works. Embracing paternalism with its facets of fatherly care and control, he purchased slaves and followed his own paternalistic instructions in their management. Cooper’s time in France during the French Revolution ended in disillusionment as he witnessed firsthand the despotic working class – the tyrannical ruling majority who beheaded the wealthy minority. These memories left Cooper fearful of democracy and an uncontrolled working class; he admired the South, in which the white male elite not only ruled politically, but also kept the enslaved working class from revolt.²³⁴

Cooper’s great dislike of British institutions drove his major political opinions. In addition to supporting slavery as an alternative system to the suffering peasantry he had

²³³ *Charleston Mercury*, Dec. 9, 1833, quoted in Platte, “Thomas Cooper Controversy,” 37.

²³⁴ In November, 1833, Cooper wrote to the Board of Trustees requesting their acceptance of his resignation as president of the college, with the understanding that he would continue as chemistry professor, with the salary commensurate to the professor’s post. After he left the President’s House on the Horseshoe, according to Edwin Green, “His home was on a hill long known as Cooper’s Hill, about two miles from the courthouse on the left of the Camden road.” The South Carolina “Legislature confided to him, with a liberal salary, the collection and digestion of the Statutes of the State,” and he “completed four volumes.” Meriwether and Green suspected that “this work was given him as compensation for the loss of the college presidency.” His illnesses increased during the last two years of his life, and he passed away in 1839. References: Cooper to the Board of Trustees, Columbia, Nov. 24, 1833, and Cooper to Warren Davis, Columbia, Jan. 3, 1834, Cooper Papers, SCL; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 43; “The Late Dr. Cooper,” in *The U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review*, July, 1839.

encountered in Britain, Cooper also led the fight against the tariff and Northern domination due to his fear that the South would suffer other British failures. The island kingdom's manufacturing system created thousands of low-paying factory jobs that kept operatives working 12-14 hours per day. The duties, monopolies, and trade regulations penetrated into the livelihoods of other individuals, even farmers. Cooper predicted that, if the South could not sell her raw materials to Britain and other European nations in exchange for their manufactured goods, the region's economy would collapse, leaving the inhabitants impoverished. Furthermore, Cooper warned the Southern elite, if the South gave in to Northern domination, they would be, in a very real sense, white slaves to Northern manufacturing giants who would disregard Southern interests much as British capitalists disregarded the good of their workers.

Cooper's British experiences profoundly influenced his philosophy; as a result, he, in turn, dramatically impacted the beliefs and behavior of not only South Carolina's citizens, but also the whole Southern region. As a renowned author of proslavery argument, his pamphlets were extremely popular reading material, especially with the ruling elite, across the South; his magnum opus, *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826), derived from classroom lectures, proved a perennial favorite for instructing college students. Cooper's rousing speeches in the Columbia State House against the tariff was the impetus for many to "calculate the value of the Union" for the first time. His leadership in the fight against the tariff, along with his career as college professor shaping young minds in the Southern doctrines of slavery and states' rights, placed Cooper among the small group of individuals who sped South Carolina and the Southern region on toward the point of secession and bloody civil war.

CHAPTER THREE

A SOUTHERNER IN EUROPE: BRITISH SOCIETY AND THE ORIGINS OF JAMES HENLEY THORNWELL'S PROSLAVERY IDEOLOGIES

Introduction

Visions of British working class misery etched a profound and lasting imprint on the mind of James Henley Thornwell during his travels to Europe in 1841. In Liverpool, he noted that women and children stood half-naked in the street, begging for food. In London, he observed the juxtaposition of palatial grandeur and sordid habitations, covered alike with the smog of industrialization. During his transatlantic voyage, Thornwell frequently felt subjected to the “ravings” of a “red-hot” British abolitionist. He noted the irony of these “radicals” in a “frenzy” to free American slaves while their own working class starved. In letters home to his wife in Columbia, South Carolina, he complained of the severe homesickness these sights engendered. Still in shock from the squalor of the British working class during his extended trip to Europe, and grateful for the comparative peace and safety of his native South, Thornwell alighted from his carriage and kissed the ground upon his return to South Carolina.²³⁵

As a result of his travel abroad, Thornwell underwent a significant strengthening of his proslavery beliefs. Thornwell was already a slaveholder before his time in Europe, but had not yet become an influential author of proslavery argument. His experiences in

²³⁵ Part of this chapter appeared originally as Jamie Diane Wilson (2015): Transatlantic Encounters and the Origins of James Henley Thornwell's Proslavery Ideology, *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*. Thornwell's kissing the ground on returning to South Carolina is found in an editor's passage in *Life and Letters of Thornwell*, 180.

Britain and, indeed, the journey across the ocean itself, arguably shaped the thinking of one of the old South's most influential proslavery ideologues. This sojourn not only reaffirmed his faith in slavery, but also inspired him to speak and write in defense of paternalism and the social protection inherent in the institution. He began to think in terms of comparison between the merits of the British and European working-class system of free labor versus the Southern slave system.²³⁶

During the Atlantic crossing in May and June 1841, Thornwell was forced by the confined nature of shipboard society to suffer through several encounters with an abolitionist whom he judged fanatical and illogical. His actual time in Britain brought the appalling conditions of the working classes before his very eyes. Blaming the capitalistic system of his day for their wretched situation, he praised the Southern system of slavery as far superior because the elite provided for and protected the slaves, who, in his opinion, constituted the Southern working class. He also predicted that capitalism would eventually degenerate into socialism once the working class rebelled against starvation. In contrast, he concluded that the slave system would keep republican freedom alive in the South. These strong beliefs, developed during his time in Britain, shaped his proslavery sermons and writings. His most influential works include *The Rights and Duties of Masters*, preached in Charleston in 1850, *Report on the Subject of Slavery*,

²³⁶ On the whole, historians of proslavery ideology have said little about the influence of travel on shaping that thinking. For example, James Oscar Farmer, in his work *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 16, 217-18, does not address the influence of Thornwell's travels abroad on his proslavery thought. The book's theme analyzes the "architects of the metaphysical confederacy" who defended the South "in an impressive apologia" and explains their contributions to the fomentation of secession and the Civil War. Although Thornwell is featured in the work, he is not its sole focus; other Southern elites are also discussed and Farmer says very little indeed about Thornwell's European travels. On page 246, Farmer makes a passing mention that Thornwell stated during his European travels that he preferred Yankees to Englishmen. Chapter 7, "The Southern Clergy and the Slavery Debate," discusses Thornwell's paternalistic view of slavery and his concern that the Presbyterian Church would be torn apart by it, but does not explore his views on slavery within a European context.

delivered to the South Carolina Presbyterian Synod in 1851, and *National Sins: A Fast-Day Sermon*, preached to his Columbia congregation in 1860. All were quickly published in pamphlet form to reach an even broader Southern readership. As a professor at South Carolina College (SCC) from 1837-1855, he fostered these convictions in the minds of his students. Thornwell evinced similar opinions on issues such as the “fanaticism” of abolitionism, the preservation of states’ rights in the South, and paternalism as his former professor Cooper and his faculty colleagues Preston and Lieber, but differed in that he tended to place these concepts within a religious framework.

Although he was not born to aristocratic slaveholders, Thornwell was exposed early to the Southern system of slavery. He was born in poverty in Marlborough District, South Carolina, in 1812 to a plantation overseer father who managed the plantation laborers. Destitute after his father’s death when Thornwell was eight years of age, he, his mother, and several siblings moved into a small home a relative provided. He enrolled at SCC at the age of seventeen in 1829. With brief exception, Thornwell made his home in Columbia for the rest of his life. At SCC, he stood at the head of his class when he graduated at age nineteen in 1831. Six years later, in 1837, Thornwell returned to SCC in the capacity of professor, bringing a few of his slaves with him.²³⁷

Thornwell was only twenty-nine when he went abroad in 1841. His very first writings on slavery are found in the travel journal he kept during the transatlantic voyage. Thornwell did not write about his proslavery opinions before the crossing, but his pre-British travel stance on slavery can be understood by analyzing his life experiences prior to that time. Although he was not born to aristocratic slaveholders, Thornwell was

²³⁷ “Obituary: Rev. James Henley Thornwell, D.D.,” *The Independent...Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social, and Economic Tendencies*, Aug. 28, 1862, 14, 717; *American Periodicals*, 4; Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 21, 27, 30-1; Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 82, 91-2, 103-5, 115, 127, 144-5.

exposed early to the Southern system of slavery. His family was served by a slave. As a student at SCC, slavery surrounded him, physically in the form of professors' slaves and college-owned slaves, and philosophically through the teachings of his professors. Cooper, Thornwell's idolized instructor, delivered frequent proslavery lectures. Upon leaving the college, Thornwell married a daughter of a plantation owner and, after his father-in-law died, owned a small plantation with slaves in Lancaster County, South Carolina. Thornwell was, then, fully immersed in the South's peculiar institution prior to his trip abroad. But it was Thornwell's travel experiences that further shaped and intensified his proslavery beliefs to the extent that he was inspired to not only participate in, but zealously propound and defend the system, as seen in his transatlantic travel journal and in letters sent home. After he returned to South Carolina until his death in 1862, his references to Europe and its free-labor system informed the core of his proslavery writings.²³⁸

During the twenty-year balance of his life after this influential trip, the following three themes consistently appear in Thornwell's proslavery writings. First, Thornwell demonstrated his indignation at what he considered the blatant hypocrisy of Europeans and Northerners, who dared to criticize the slave system despite the fact that their working class suffered from starvation and lack of shelter. Second, Thornwell feared that socialism and communism, already fomenting in 1840s France and Britain, would inevitably emerge out of the failures of the capitalist mode of production. Lastly, Thornwell touted his ideal social system, slaveholding paternalism generously flavored

²³⁸ "Obituary: Rev. James Henley Thornwell, D.D.," 14, 717; *American Periodicals*, 4; Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 21, 27, 30-1, 82, 91-2, 103-5, 115, 127, 144-5.

with religion, and exulted in the safety of his beloved South from socialism and communism.

Certainly, travel to the Northern United States sometimes evoked Southern responses comparable to their European travel reactions. “Southerners who traveled to the North expressed dismay at the conditions in the large cities,” Fox-Genovese and Genovese attest. Visitors expressed astonishment over the squalid conditions of the starving poor, decried factory working conditions, and pointed to instances of burgeoning socialism. O’Brien also points to the similar influence of Northern and European travels, but focuses on Southerners visiting the North. The sectional prejudice that permeated Southerners’ minds colored their impressions of Northern society. Southern travelers’ dislike for the Northern wage-labor system, therefore, can be explained not just by elements such as working-class misery, but also by growing regional hostilities in the 1840s and 1850s. Southerners were less likely to be biased against European nations and could, therefore, give more impartial responses. Historians can gather more of Southerners’ true opinions on the capitalist wage-labor system, then, by examining visits to Europe as well as those to the North. As Sam Haynes remarks, “Though still in its infancy, the American industrial experience was well on its way to replicating Britain’s ‘dark satanic mills.’”²³⁹

In Thornwell’s particular case, his writings demonstrate that British travels proved far more influential to his intellectual development than his visits to the North. Thornwell attended Harvard for a year in 1834, but returned to South Carolina without completing his studies. In a letter to William Robbins, he enumerated his dissatisfactions

²³⁹ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 142-5; see chapter one, “A Moral Terra Incognita,” in O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, concerning sectionalist prejudice in Southern travel accounts of Northern visits.

with his associates, as well as the religious state and climate of the North. Thornwell did not record his impressions on the Northern socioeconomic conditions, however, or contrast Northern and Southern culture. From a statement written in Britain, “families poorer than the poorest I ever saw in America,” one can deduce that Thornwell considered the Northern workers’ situation an improvement on British conditions.²⁴⁰

I. Thornwell’s Transatlantic Voyage

Thornwell’s transatlantic exposure began in 1841 when his physicians prescribed a sea voyage to aid his recovery from an illness. Conveniently, SCC needed a professor to travel abroad on college business, so the trustees sent Thornwell to Europe for both reasons. His proslavery writings and sermons appeared after this trip and bear the strong marks of its influence. Although he also visited France, his experiences in Britain conversing with British abolitionists and exploring cities firsthand impacted his future writings and sermons more than any of his other European experiences.²⁴¹

Britain had, only a few years before Thornwell’s visit, succeeded in abolishing slavery in its Caribbean colonies. Having already reached their ultimate goal, British antislavery advocates decided on a new mission: abolition throughout the world, and particularly in the United States. Haynes attests, “[I]n playing midwife to the antislavery movement in the United States, British reformers had made the republic’s greatest challenge an even more intractable and polarizing one.” As John Oldfield argued, the encouragement William Lloyd Garrison and other Northern abolitionists received at the 1840 World Antislavery Convention in London helped to empower the American movement. “Veneration for Britain undoubtedly helped to shape the political

²⁴⁰ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 161.

²⁴¹ Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 157, 169.

consciousness of American abolitionism,” he explains. Black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass were treated as equals by whites in Britain, no doubt further stoking Southern fears. Northern antislavery communities, Oldfield points out, began holding celebrations on August 1, British emancipation day.²⁴²

The fact that British antislavery zeal had resulted in the emancipation of 800,000 Caribbean slaves further infuriated and frightened the South. According to David Brion Davis, the South cited Britain’s financial losses following the 1834 emancipation and declared that Britain had been foolish to damage her own economy for what, to the South’s planter-led government, seemed a misguided moral gesture. Oldfield describes the aftermath of 1834 emancipation for Caribbean planters; “In the Caribbean [emancipation] was a stark reality – a social and economic revolution that for most whites, at least, represented the end of the world as they knew it. Fiercely protective of their financial interests, the planter elite had for years resisted any attempt to end or even ameliorate slavery, predicting that such ‘interference’ would lead to black insurrection, the ‘extermination of whites,’ and the utter ruin of the colonies.” Southern slaveowners like Thornwell saw their possible futures mirrored in the situation of these neighboring Caribbean planters.²⁴³

Britain threatened to wreak the same havoc in Southern society that it had wrought in the Caribbean by influencing the North to demand the abolishment of slavery in the United States. Haynes states that Southern slaveholders, in their perennial fear of

²⁴² Jeremy Black, “Suppressing the Slave Trade,” in *British Abolitionism and the Question of Moral Progress in History*, Donald Yerxa, ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 47; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 147, 178, 190, 203; J.R. Oldfield, *Chords of Freedom: Commemorations, ritual and British transatlantic slavery* (Manchester University Press, 2007), 141-5, 150.

²⁴³ David Brion Davis, “Slavery, Emancipation, and Progress,” in *British Abolitionism*, 13, 20-4. Davis asserted that Britain’s move of emancipation was an economic sacrifice the nation made for a higher moral good. To him, this event “suggest[ed] that human history has...been something more than an endless contest of greed and power”; Oldfield, *Chords of Freedom*, 152-3.

revolt, “regarded the Caribbean as a giant tinderbox, one spark from which would set their world aflame.” Some even felt that the British Caribbean emancipation so near the Southern coast was a personal affront; “the idea that the British government intended to use West Indian emancipation to agitate the slavery question in the United States enjoyed wide credence.” William Freehling states that the animosity of the South for Britain had been fanned still further by certain British politicians’ overtures to aid, or perhaps annex, Texas if it would emancipate its slaves. James Henry Hammond calculated that the British government had compensated Caribbean plantation owners at 60% of each slaves’ value, Seymour Drescher relates. Unacceptable as Hammond deemed this percentage, it would have been impossible for the United States Government to give Southern slaveholders that amount even for each year’s newborn slaves. It is safe to say that Southern slaveholders were very hostile toward British abolitionists.²⁴⁴

In *Being American in Europe: 1750-1860*, Daniel Kilbride emphasizes the idea that American travelers’ visits to Britain in particular involved Americans’ placement of themselves in the Atlantic world. Travel journals, he believes, “provide an unparalleled perspective on how Americans defined themselves within and against Europe in the formative period of national identity.” He remarks that numerous travelers stood aghast at the poverty in Britain and Europe, and that some proslavery theorists used the condition of the European working class to support their arguments. The average Southern traveler

²⁴⁴ Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 147, 178, 190, 203, 215, 217, 224; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, discusses the attempts of a few English politicians to compensate Texas slaveowners and free their slaves. British minister to the United States, Edward Fox, offered to pay passage for free Southern blacks to move to the Caribbean and work in an equal environment as paid laborers, but Secretary of State Abel Upshur refused based on states’ rights doctrine and because of his fear that abolitionists would visit the South. Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 296. Chapter 10, “From Colonial Emancipation to Global Abolition,” and Chapter 11, “The End of Slavery in Anglo America,” provide further detail on the history of British and American abolitionism.

“focused on the class systems that produced extremes of wealth and poverty in Europe” and extolled both the Northern and Southern United States as a result. America’s defenders of slavery, on visiting Europe, “insisted that slaves enjoyed better living conditions than workers in so-called free societies, especially England and the northern United States,” Kilbride argues. Such was the case with Thornwell, one of the South’s preeminent proslavery thinkers. His close encounters with British society in 1841 shaped and informed in precise and meaningful ways his later writings on slavery, proslavery argument, and the fate of the democracy and capitalism.²⁴⁵

During the crossing from the United States to Great Britain, Thornwell made entries in his travel journal about his encounters with one British abolitionist which align with the currents of thought in his native section. The acquaintance did not begin on a positive note; “I was a good deal amused today with the thoroughly English self-conceit of my radical friend.” A marked prejudice against Great Britain surfaced in his journal: “I could discern in all our English fellow passengers the hateful self-importance of their national character,” he wrote. Thornwell deplored the view of several British citizens that everything pertaining to them and their nation was superior to the United States. For example, he mentioned overhearing, in the course of his travels, British citizens commenting that their ships, government, buildings, and markets far outstripped those they were seeing in America. In addition, the British scorned keeping the Sabbath, a religious tenet dear to the minister’s heart.²⁴⁶

Thornwell kept a journal of his impressions and letters to relatives and friends at home that remains in manuscript form. The South Carolinian tourist wrote to his wife of

²⁴⁵ Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 7, 89, 145.

²⁴⁶ Thornwell, “1841 Journal,” Thornwell Papers, SCL.

his intention to keep an extensive travel-book on his trip abroad, but found himself so busy that he kept a journal only while aboard ship, and wrote letters home to supplement the journal while abroad, in which he described his impressions of England and Europe. Thornwell's, like most travel-books of the era, contained a certain amount of nationalist arrogance. This antipathy was common in the travel-books of both nationalities. The English tended to make an "automatic assumption of superiority to the social values and cultural life of America," which brought on a "tone of condescension." Both American and English tourists, either in London or in Boston, frequently found themselves "surprised by gross violations of taste." Haynes declares that, between 1830 and 1850, "Americans during the Jacksonian period routinely indulged in transatlantic scapegoating," constantly heaping "denunciations...against Britain's social and political systems" and fearing sabotage from across the pond. In addition to the American climate of distrust, the South Carolinian, Thornwell, had greater cause to despise Great Britain, and would have still more after his transatlantic voyage and time on British soil.²⁴⁷

The relationship between Thornwell and his shipmate, the "English radical," went from bad to worse. "At breakfast," Thornwell fumed, "I found that our Englishman was a red-hot radical [abolitionist]." The two discussed Daniel O'Connell, a popular Irish abolitionist who, in the minds of many antislavery Americans, outweighed even William Wilberforce in influence. O'Connell, a Member of Parliament, had achieved Irish support for the abolitionist movement and promoted the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.

Thornwell declared him "a black-guard [and a] mere political agitator, destitute of all fixed principles, and guided by popular caprice and personal interest." Preston and Lieber

²⁴⁷ Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo American Travel Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3-4, 8-9, 19; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 202.

demonstrated similar negative opinions of O'Connell. Evidently, the English shipmate disagreed with the South Carolinian and praised O'Connell's abolitionist contribution. Thornwell fumed into his journal, "He [the English shipmate] was particularly violent on the subject of slavery, pronouncing it to be a disgrace to America, a practical abandonment of her liberal principles, growing out of nothing but the avarice and idleness of the slaveholders, who he declared to be a pack of worthless vagabonds that ought at once to be put to work."²⁴⁸

This abolitionist's assessment proved particularly insulting to Thornwell. Although his financial needs forced him to hold outside employment in addition to his small plantation, the fact remained that he owned slaves and many of his close friends and associates were exclusively planters. Thornwell considered himself a patriotic citizen of the United States and approved of its 'liberal principles', which he interpreted as permitting slavery. The South Carolinian, feeling he had the advantage of firsthand knowledge about the condition of Southern slaves, also doubted the abolitionist's veracity: "He had collected somewhere, or fabricated for the occasion, some wonderfully pathetic stories, illustrative of the barbarous treatment of the slaves by cruel masters, which he expectorated with a great deal of warmth and enthusiasm."²⁴⁹

Thornwell's opinion that abolitionists proved overly sentimental, especially in their examples of slavery, was not isolated. A marked "rhetoric of sensibility" developed in British abolitionist literature to make readers aware of human suffering and to spur them to action. Readers who felt this type of work too "sentimental" objected to the constant portrayal of blacks as noble suspected that their sufferings were exaggerated for

²⁴⁸ Christine Kinealy, "The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and Anti-Slavery," *History Today*, Volume 57, Issue 12, 2007; Thornwell, "1841 Journal."

²⁴⁹ Thornwell, "1841 Journal."

effect. One literary historian later described certain British abolitionist writings as “addressing not the humanity of the reader but his sentiment.” In order to achieve this dubious but highly effective sentimentality, the “antislavery literature of England willfully ignores facts” and the “humanitarian impact of the abolitionist movement...was smothered by a muck of sentimentality.”²⁵⁰

Thornwell considered this an unseemly enthusiasm and it made an extreme and lasting impression upon him, surfacing later in his writings and sermons. “The truth is, wherever you find it,” Thornwell fumed, “abolitionism is a species of madness, a hot, boiling, furious fanaticism, destroying all energy of mind and symmetry of character, leaving its victim, like the blasted oak, a specter of fear and of dread.” The South Carolinian felt that abolitionism was another manifestation of a modern sector of society that eschewed traditional government, social mores, and personal morality. “It is only a single aspect, a special direction of mania – a particular form of a general spirit of socialism, teetotalism, [and] perfectionism [that] are all great diseases...” Although abolitionism was his special dread, Thornwell also distrusted these other movements of the era. He believed that socialism undermined personal liberty. As one who enjoyed fine wines, he believed that teetotalism curtailed innocent human pleasure. Thornwell, as a Presbyterian minister, disagreed with the idea that the world could be perfected because God had declared all men to be sinners and the world as fallen.²⁵¹

Thornwell believed that some of what he considered these misdirected movements started with generous intentions on the participants’ part. “The zeal for

²⁵⁰ Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 46-9. Carey references literary historian Wylie Sypher in *British Antislavery Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (1942).

²⁵¹ Thornwell, “1841 Journal.”

human happiness by which the agents [of the] movements of the day – particularly the abolitionist, profess...is a mere delusion,” he asserted. “Their philanthropy always evaporates when there is no opportunity of creating excitement... They no doubt deceive themselves in their hearts into the belief that the strange excitement [under] which they labor is the genuine spirit of benevolence.” Thornwell believed that the radical feelings that were a part of modern movements contributed heavily to the activists’ deterioration. “They feel a powerful convulsion within a tremendous stimulus to action and enterprise and confound it with the motives of a generous philanthropy,” he analyzed. “[J]ust in proportion to the strength of their self-delusion will be the violence of their efforts and the bitterness of denunciation with which they assail others.”²⁵²

On discovering the fact that Europeans heaped judgment upon the South for the institution of slavery, Thornwell was furious. “Feeling free from sin themselves, they can cast a stone at their erring brethren without compunction or remorse.” This self-righteous indignation of Thornwell, who was, after all, a Presbyterian minister, became a common theme in his later works. He also enlarged upon it once he saw Great Britain for himself, a visit which gave him proof for another comment he wrote in his sea voyage journal; “When they have freed the slave he may rot in beggary and wretchedness and they will never lift a finger to relieve him.”²⁵³

II. Sojourn in Great Britain

The phenomenon of European, and particularly British, experience as intensifier of proslavery beliefs was not unique to Thornwell. As Fox-Genovese and Genovese note in *Slavery in White and Black*, many slaveholding travelers reacted to Europe’s emergent

²⁵² Thornwell, “1841 Journal.”

²⁵³ Thornwell, “1841 Journal.”

social system in ways similar to Thornwell's. John Randolph, Southern politician, wrote of London in 1826, "One class is dying of hunger and another of surfeit." James Henry Hammond, South Carolina governor and notorious slave abuser, declared emotionally after witnessing the European poor in the same decade, "It makes the heart ache to walk the streets." Thornwell's proslavery thought, like that of the many other Southern elites whose European travels Fox-Genovese and Genovese mention, was certainly influenced by his transatlantic experiences.²⁵⁴

Docking at Liverpool in June 1841, Thornwell immediately wrote at length to his wife detailing his impressions of the city. He compared housing conditions and surmised that those of even the poorest regions of the American South were superior to their British counterparts. "The streets are narrow and crowded, and, in some parts of the town, disgustingly filthy." He observed that "buildings...were smoky and dingy from the immense quantities of coal consumed here." In another letter to his old friend James Gillespie, he wrote in the same vein, "Every thing of course, here as every where else in England, is smoked black." Coal smog symbolized to visitors the exploitation surrounding the mining business, which took the health, and often the lives, of workers in areas near the city. In Liverpool, the smog of burning coal was the accompaniment of capitalistic industrialization, which Thornwell despised.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 124-9. Fox-Genovese and Genovese briefly commented on Thornwell's Liverpool experiences: "The Presbyterian James Henley Thornwell of South Carolina did not bear the sufferings of the lower classes with equanimity...Writing to his wife from Liverpool, he expressed astonishment at the widespread hunger, horrible housing, and unspeakable way of life." Stephanie McCurry's *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1995) briefly discusses Thornwell's role in South Carolina's social and intellectual scene, but does not mention his European travels.

²⁵⁵ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

“I...found the cellars damp, dark, and filthy, occupied by families poorer than the poorest I ever saw in America,” he lamented. Poverty in general was not a novel concept to Thornwell, as he had lived in poverty as a boy, taught school in a poor farming area, visited various areas of South Carolina, a state where thousands of poor farmers resided, and even lived for a year in the Northern metropolis of Boston with its struggling immigrant population. European poverty not only exceeded rural South Carolina in his estimation, but also the urban North. Amazed, he wrote, “In one day – (for they do things rapidly here where labour is abundant and bread scarce) I was rigged out in a...new suit of English broad cloth.” In his future proslavery writings, Thornwell would denounce the misery of the working classes in both Europe and the North. He later wrote that “the philanthropists of Europe and America” ignored, “with a rare expansion of benevolence, the...sufferings of their own neighbors and countrymen.”²⁵⁶

Thornwell enlarged upon his dismay over the scenes he had witnessed. “Sometimes two or three families, amounting to about twenty persons, live in a single room, several feet under ground, in a hole not larger than our pantry, with not a single window in it,” he marveled in a letter to his wife in June 1841. In South Carolina, there was space and sunshine for the poor, even for the slaves. His former professor, Cooper, had built a freestanding two-story dwelling for his slave families so that they would not be in the basement of the commodious Presidents’ House on the SCC campus. Even Thornwell’s own pantry, a relatively modest, utilitarian space in his comfortable home, appeared in a positive light, making him homesick for even the mundane accommodations of his native region. There were no pantries in these British dwellings;

²⁵⁶ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, and Thornwell to Gillespie, July 15, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Thornwell, *The Rights and the Duties of Masters*, 7.

in the majority of cases, there was no food to store and the occupants struggled to obtain enough food to survive.²⁵⁷

His rant continued; the British working classes “pay nearly all that they can earn by hard labor for their rent. This is *wretchedness*, this is poverty indeed.” Rent costs left almost nothing for the other necessities of life, particularly food, clothing, and coal or wood for a fire in the cold, damp climate. Slaves worked many hard hours too, but, in Thornwell’s opinion, they received all the necessities of life for their labor – snug cabins, food, clothing, and firewood they could chop for themselves from the master’s land. In the hospitable subtropical climate of South Carolina, however, the slaves required far fewer fires than the British poor. Later, Thornwell would exhort congregations to conscientiously care for their slaves and declared that “denying to them food and raiment, and shelter” was a shocking “injustice.” It was apparent that wealth existed in Liverpool that could be allocated to the poor. He noted in a letter to Gillespie, “The public buildings are large and elegant – built upon a more durable extensive and costly scale than buildings of the same sort in America.” He noted the contrast between wealth and poverty; “But in external neatness we far excel them. Our cities are more refreshing to the eye – being neither dingy nor smoky,” he said of the United States.²⁵⁸

After touring the “splendid seat” of the Duke of Westminster, Eaton Hall at Chester, Thornwell “came away almost a chartist,” he confided to Gillespie. The Duke’s “park gardens and pleasure grounds cover about thirty square miles – tastefully and beautifully laid out – his balls and saloons are magnificently furnished – his hot-houses

²⁵⁷ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Dec. 7, 1833, SCL.

²⁵⁸ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, and Thornwell to Gillespie, July 15, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 20-21.

teem with all the luxuries of the earth and present every vanity of climate and that too upon a very large scale – his stables are fine – large – two-story gothic brick buildings,” Thornwell described, marveling over the sheer superfluity of unnecessary accoutrements on the estate. “He himself is rolling in luxury and supporting a thousand beasts of pleasure while multitudes around him are absolutely starving for the very necessities of life. Probably you will hardly leave the princely mansion before you meet a miserable mendicant in rags and tatters begging for a penny.” In sadness and anger, he confessed, “The contrast produces a terrible revulsion in one’s feelings.”²⁵⁹

As he toured the streets in the poorer sections of Liverpool, Thornwell encountered beggars personally. “Sometimes you meet a wretched, squalid woman in ragged clothes, barefooted, with a sheet, or something like it, tied around her, and two or three little children fastened in it.” In the South, he was accustomed to men who provided for their dependents and kept them out of the thoroughfares. Females in Thornwell’s social strata, and even most below it, were modestly clothed; they would never have worn anything resembling a sheet, let alone gone barefoot. Children, in Thornwell’s view, were a blessing from God to be carefully brought up in earthly and heavenly virtues. He cared deeply for his own children, planned carefully for their welfare, and frequently mentioned them in his letters home. Thornwell even showed interest in his female slaves’ children. In later years, he wrote his brother-in-law, “[O]ne of my little negroes, a very promising child of Norah’s, died unexpectedly.” Reflecting religious concern for her soul, he added, “I sincerely trust that she was prepared for the change.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Thornwell to Gillespie, July 15, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

²⁶⁰ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Thornwell to A.J. Witherspoon, Dec. 28, 1859, in *Life and Letters*, 444.

Liverpool women were commonly seen “begging for bread, or alms of some sort, and exciting your compassion by pointing to the helpless condition of her babes.” In Thornwell’s South, society expected men to provide for their families, not only necessities, but some of life’s comforts as well. In British society at that time, men were sometimes unable to provide for women and children, due to lack of employment, illness, or premature death. The capitalist system, giving wage labor a pittance when providing a job at all, made it quite difficult for even an employed man to provide decently for his family. The fabric of society, the family unit Thornwell cherished, was ripping apart. Encounters like this one angered Thornwell towards Great Britain and Europe’s governmental policies and their economic interpretation of the capitalist system, which he later denounced in his sermons.²⁶¹

Great Britain’s government was quite at variance with Thornwell’s ideal southern republic. “The police is stationed, a man for about fifty yards, along every street, so as to be within a moment’s call for the purpose of suppressing mobs, riots, and all disorder.” Thornwell later declared that the working class would not starve forever. “Bread they must have, and bread they will have, though all the distinctions of property have to be abolished to provide it,” he wrote after his travels. Groups of hungry workers would

²⁶¹ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Clayton Roberts, David Roberts, and Douglas Bisson, *A History of England: Volume II, 1688 to the Present* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 583, 602-4, corroborates Thornwell’s opinion concerning Liverpool and London’s squalor and their miserable poor. In the 1830s and 1840s, Britain’s upper and middle classes began to acknowledge the conditions prevalent in large factory towns and the London metropolis. Individuals like Charles Dickens and government officials reported on the “cruelty and negligence of English society.” They particularly mentioned the “poverty, crime, and unsanitary towns” and described those who lived there: “the part-time laborer, the underemployed, the unemployable” and “the street people – hawkers, peddlers, ragpickers – the old, the ill, and the orphaned...the thieves and prostitutes.” Many of these individuals “lived in slums – some on low wages, some on poor relief, some on charities and begging, and many by scavenging or petty thievery.” Sources agree that “their rooms were abysmal...In Liverpool a third of the families lived in cellar dwellings; every day in London 80,000 bought nightly or weekly tickets for a bed in an unventilated, filthy dormitory; the least fortunate spent the night under bridges and railway arches.”

revolt against the system that disregarded their misery, eventually overtake the government, and institute mob rule, reminiscent of the French Revolution. The rioting mobocracy would throw society into disorder by establishing a socialistic government. The business of politics suited this climate of oppression. “The Tories and Whigs [sic] are equally violent and equally abusive,” Thornwell attested. “They have public meetings, make furious speeches, abuse the Government, curse one another, generally close by raising a mob, and these are scattered by the police.” Since the upper class gave slaves all necessities and kept them in check, the ideal Southern republic could continue untrammelled by threats of democracy, mob rule, or communism.²⁶²

“You see an immense poor population here, all ragged and dirty, and begging for alms at almost every corner you turn,” Thornwell attested in a sweeping statement of condemnation of British gentry, who neglected their poor. Liverpool was a city of industry, and its wealthy tycoons, the minister thought, were not attending to their responsibilities – the poor of their land. In his home city of Columbia, society’s poor did not beg on the streets, but lived with their wealthy masters. The skin color of the British working-class was not that of a different, dark race, but it varied nearly as much from the upper and middle classes due to the dirt and damage from exposure that marred and darkened it. Slaves benefitted from paternalistic care, and he believed the British working class would, too, a group also separated from society’s upper class by wealth, education, and even, in a sense, color.²⁶³

The conditions of the British poor further endeared Thornwell to his own country. “I must say, that in all that makes life precious, and exalts, refines, and elevates the mass

²⁶² Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

²⁶³ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, London, July 2, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

of the people, America is immeasurably superior to England. Give me my own country forever,” the heavy-hearted traveler wrote from London, Britain’s great metropolis. “I have seen much of the common people, having arrived here at the time of the general elections.” He went through these “crowds with [his] hands on [his] watch and...purse” – the rate of robbery was high in poor, heavily populated areas. The British government, contrary to the republican ideal, kept political power firmly in its grip. “I have witnessed something of bribery, fraud, and intimidation, which are practiced by the rich and great.”²⁶⁴

Peering through the “smoke” even in London’s better areas, Thornwell was again reminded of capitalistic industrialization and the filthy living conditions of the inhabitants of the “vast metropolis.” He noted the “astonishing contrasts” of the city: enormous wealth and splendor for the nobility, and the ‘mighty mass of brick, and stone, and shipping, dirty and dusky,’ for the others. In the town of Chester, near Liverpool, he noted, “The houses are low, dreadfully smoked...and shockingly crowded together.” Thornwell sighed, “I see what is excellent in England, but I see so much of an opposite character, that I must still sigh for my native land. The tories [sic] here have a prodigious prejudice against us, and abolitionism is, if possible, more fanatical here than in America.”²⁶⁵

Less information remains about Thornwell’s trip to Paris, but, based on his later writings, it greatly influenced him. In a letter to his wife, he recounted the visit; echoing his views on Liverpool and London, he declared himself disappointed with the general appearance of Paris and complained that “the streets are narrow and dirty.” His view of

²⁶⁴ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, London, July 2, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

²⁶⁵ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Liverpool, June 16, 1841; Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, June 28, 1841; and Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, London, July 2, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

the Parisian working class reinforced his British impressions and surfaced in his later writings. A year later, he called France a place “which God seems to have made a striking example of the weakness, ignorance and folly of man.” The people were vacillating between three government options: one of two royal families or a republican experiment, which had proved more of a democratic mob rule during France’s previous history. “Liberty and Protestantism are the only things” which could bring “stability to the French character,” he opined. Fox-Genovese and Genovese state, “In July 1848, James Henley Thornwell, disgusted by French ‘blundering,’ expressed sympathy for the Parisian workers whom a rapacious bourgeoisie had driven to insurrection: ‘A ball has been set in motion upon the relations of capital and labor, whose progress it will be extremely difficult to arrest.’” Thornwell returned home after his sojourns in Great Britain and France and resumed his everyday life, but the influence of his experiences abroad would become quite evident in his sermons and proslavery writings.²⁶⁶

III. Later Writings and Influence

Following his return to South Carolina from Europe, Thornwell authored several influential works, and three specific themes relate these works to his British travel experiences. The memories formed during his firsthand observation of the British poor stoked his resentment of European and Northern presumption in demanding that Southerners abolish slavery. The capitalist system responsible for the laborers’ deplorable state, Thornwell insisted, would result in a cataclysmic change: society-leveling socialism and communism in Europe and the Northern United States. He then prescribed his ideal society: Southern paternalism.

²⁶⁶ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Paris, July 2, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Thornwell to William Robbins, Aug. 27, 1842, in *Life and Letters*, 233; Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 53.

Throughout his works, Thornwell employed the concept that the European poor were in a far worse condition than slaves in an effort to bolster his arguments about European, Northern, and Southern society. Although Britain influenced him most profoundly, Thornwell commonly referred to the system of “Europe” in his works, probably including additional memories of suffering laborers that he did not record during his travels. He held to a specific definition of the Southern working class, which he considered to be the slaves. While there was a small white Southern working class at this time, Thornwell made clear his belief that slaves constituted the Southern working class, comparable to the white working class in Great Britain and the Continent. In a sermon, Thornwell designated “masters and servants” as the “different classes of the community.”²⁶⁷

Thornwell, not unlike other Southern ideologues who had traveled to Europe, connected the European working class situation with that of the Northern poor, and Europe’s “fanatic” abolitionist views with those of his northern countrymen. He sought to convince Southerners to hold firm to the social and economic practice of slavery despite European and Northern insistence that the South abolish slavery and implement modern capitalism. To this end, Thornwell increased his participation in the fight by preaching and publishing proslavery arguments.

Thornwell’s influence and reputation steadily increased. Alongside his role as a clergyman, author, and magazine editor, Thornwell continued to serve as a professor at SCC. He held the position from 1837-1839, teaching logic and criticism, and from 1841-1851, filled the chair of sacred literature and evidences of Christianity at SCC. Between

²⁶⁷ Thornwell, *A Review of John B. Adger’s Sermon on the Religious Instruction of the Coloured Population* (Charleston: Burges, James, and Paxton, Printers, 1847), 3-5.

1852 and 1855, he presided as college president in addition to his professorship, and preached in the college chapel. He presented proslavery lectures to prepare his students to be able to defend the Southern institution to others in their future leadership positions. Students well remembered his arguments long after leaving college (see chapter six.)

The professor and theologian also influenced Southerners' thinking on slavery through his published writings. As editor of the *Southern Quarterly Review* in 1856, he published an article by George Frederick Holmes entitled "Slavery and Freedom," purchased for \$97.50, which the editor considered "a poor compensation for such an essay." As a major contributor to the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, he wrote in a letter that "Several of my articles in the Southern Presbyterian Review had been re-published in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, and some of them had been complimented very highly." Thornwell received mail from some of his avid readers, who asked how they could obtain a new pamphlet that had just appeared or requested additional copies of his work for their associates. One of Thornwell's fans, a James Taylor Jones of Alabama who resided at Princeton, New Jersey, wrote, "Having seen several notices of a sermon preached by you at Charleston – and being very desirous to read it, I am induced to apply to you for it. The sermon I refer to is on 'The Rights and Duties of Masters.' If you could conveniently send me a copy of it, I would be much obliged to you." The sermon Jones requested was one of Thornwell's most widely read proslavery works.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 347-8; Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 155; Thornwell to George Frederick Holmes, Columbia, June 17, 1856, in *Life and Letters*, 398; Thornwell to James Gillespie, London, July 21, 1860, in *Life and Letters*, 454; Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 536-537; James Taylor Jones to Thornwell, Princeton, NJ, April 1, 1852, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

A. Fighting Abolitionism in the Presbyterian Assembly

Thornwell was highly influential in the Presbyterian Assembly, particularly in the Synod of South Carolina, and aided in decision making concerning church policy on slavery. Not long after he returned from Europe, the northern and southern branches of the Presbyterian churches in the United States began to formally disagree over slavery. Making what was then a long and arduous journey to Cincinnati, Ohio, Thornwell attended the assembly meeting to argue for the validity of slavery as an institution and defend it against the charge of sinfulness. Writing to his wife, he explained his role in the event: “The question of slavery has been brought before the house, and...I have been consulted on the subject, and have drawn up a paper, which I think the committee and the Assembly will adopt; and if they do,” he exulted, “abolitionism will be killed in the Presbyterian Church, at least for the present.”²⁶⁹

Believing as he did that the institution of slavery was necessary to the Southern economic and social structure, Thornwell had high hopes for success at the meeting. “I have no doubt but that the Assembly, by a very large majority,” he predicted, “will declare slavery not to be sinful, will assert that it is ordained by the will of God, that it is purely a civil relation, with which the Church, as such, has no right to interfere, and that abolitionism is essentially wicked, disorganizing, and ruinous.” Still smarting from the scathing criticism of his English abolitionist shipmate, who called slaveholders greedy, lazy, and inhumane, Thornwell particularly hoped that Northern Presbyterian Christians could be stopped from passing judgment on their Southern brothers and sisters. “The Southern members have invited discussion, and they will triumphantly gain the day. It will be a great matter to put the agitations on slavery at rest, and to save the Church from

⁴¹ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Cincinnati, May 19, 1845, in *Life and Letters*, 286.

dismemberment and schism.” In addition to church unity, Thornwell did not wish to see the sort of emotional, frenzied abolitionist beliefs he had witnessed in England disrupt traditional Presbyterian religious order.²⁷⁰

The meeting results proved satisfactory, but not quite what Thornwell had hoped. In the postscript of the letter to his wife, he stated, “The committee did not adopt my report fully on slavery, but will bring in one that takes nearly the same position; one which vindicates the South, and will put the question at rest.” This expedition began Thornwell’s career as a proponent of proslavery argument. “My speech has made me the object of general attention and curiosity,” he proudly confided. “I have had compliments, which God may grant may not injure my humility.” As he rode through the country on the way home to South Carolina from Cincinnati, he wrote to his wife again, mentioning the relative value of the “western lands” as compared to the North, which was challenging the institution of slavery. In closing, he wrote, “I will only add that abolitionism is a humbug. A prudent course, on the part of the South, will kill it entirely.”²⁷¹

Thornwell edited, wrote, and published a summary of a sermon by John Adger, a missionary to Southern slaves, in 1847. In the summary, Thornwell made clear many of his own beliefs about slaves as the Southern working class, comparable to that in Great Britain and on the Continent, and explained the beliefs he shared in common with Adger that the Southern elite had a responsibility to their slaves. “The enquiry – who are our poor – is beautifully and happily answered in the following [sermon],” Thornwell praised Adger. “The poor of this city [Columbia] are easily distinguishable. They are in a class

²⁷⁰ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Cincinnati, May 19, 1845, in *Life and Letters*, 286.

²⁷¹ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Wheeling, Virginia, June 14, 1845, in *Life and Letters*, 287-8.

separated by their colour, their position in society, their relation to our families, their national origin, and their moral, intellectual, and physical condition,” Adger had asserted in his sermon.²⁷²

Thornwell viewed the European poor similarly – their “moral, intellectual, and physical condition” could not have been more different from his affluence and education. “There they are – behold them!” Adger, in his sermon, declared of Columbia’s poor, the slave population. “See them all around you, in all these streets, in all these dwellings – a race distinct from us, yet closely united to us.” Slaves were “brought...from a foreign land, and placed under our care and made members of our households. They fill the humblest places of our society.”²⁷³

Different as the slaves were from Adger’s listeners and Thornwell’s readers, both men agreed that a connection and responsibility existed. “[N]owhere are the poor so closely and intimately connected with the higher classes as are our poor with us. *They belong to us. We also belong to them.*” Adger described the relationship; “They are divided out among us and mingled up with us, and we with them, in a thousand ways. They live with us,” he reminded the audience, “eating from the same storehouses, drinking from the same fountains, dwelling in the same enclosures, forming parts of the same families.” This poor, the slave population, were an integral part of the lives of the upper-class from birth to death.²⁷⁴

As a result, Adger stated that elite and middle-class slaveholders had certain obligations to the poor of their town. In his review, Thornwell agreed that slaves required their own churches and proper instruction in religion, which they currently lacked. In the

²⁷² Thornwell, *Review of John B. Adger’s Sermon*, 3-5.

²⁷³ Thornwell, *Review of Adger’s Sermon*, 3-5.

²⁷⁴ Thornwell, *Review of Adger’s Sermon*, 3-5.

South, slaves usually attended the same churches as their masters, something Thornwell believed unsuitable because most of the preaching was aimed at a higher educational level than the slaves possessed. The slaves, therefore, had difficulty comprehending the religious instruction offered. “The same Gospel must be differently dispensed, in order to have its full measure of success upon men so diverse in capacities and attainments as the two races among us,” Thornwell wrote. In addition, the edifices sometimes lacked the space for all the slaves in a community to be admitted. The minister’s belief that Southerners put forward a genuine effort to improve their slaves’ quality of life, and that preaching and pamphlets on proper slave treatment would further improve the slaves’ situation, increased his displeasure with Europeans and Northerners who criticized Southern slavery.²⁷⁵

B. Resentment of European and Northern Presumption Concerning Slavery

Pre-Civil War sectional tensions heavily influenced Thornwell’s discussion of the North in his post-European works. For Thornwell, these tensions painfully played out in discord between Northern Presbyterians and Southern Presbyterians. He maintained contact with Northern Presbyterians as a leader in the Presbyterian Synod, and their hostile reactions to Southern Presbyterian slaveholders grieved him. The minister believed that “abolitionist frenzy” from Europe had divided American Christians. Although he felt Northern society was an improvement on British society, Thornwell believed that the North was headed in the same disastrous direction. Thornwell surely realized, for example, that British abolitionism had dramatically influenced Northerners, both in favor of abolition and against Southern society. “In the South, moderates fearful of rising sectional tensions...clung to the belief that Northern extremism was the product

²⁷⁵ Thornwell, *Review of Adger’s Sermon*, 3-5.

of British subterfuge...they took note of the money and literature that had poured into the country from English abolitionist organizations,” Haynes notes. Influenced by his time in Britain to a remarkable degree, Thornwell habitually interpreted circumstances in the North through the lens of his experiences abroad.²⁷⁶

One of Thornwell’s major themes was the hypocrisy of Europeans and Northerners who, though their own working class desperately needed assistance, chose to focus on and criticize Southern slave society. “The slave-holding states of this confederacy [United States] have been placed under the ban of the publick [sic] opinion of the civilized world. The philanthropy of Christendom seems to have concentrated its sympathies upon us,” he preached in 1850. Thornwell’s anger was palpable as he exclaimed, “We have been denounced, with every epithet of vituperation and abuse, as conspirators against the dignity of man – traitors to our race, and rebels against God.” Developing the theme begun in his travel journal, Thornwell expressed self-righteous indignation to the congregation of Charleston’s Second Presbyterian Church that European philanthropists could find “nothing worth reviling but the avarice, inhumanity, and cruelty of the Southern master, and nothing worth laboring to extirpate but the system which embodies these outrages and wrongs.”²⁷⁷

Thornwell viewed these “philanthropic” individuals as hard-hearted, deliberately avoiding the desperate cries of hungry women and children on their own streets. “Others groan under their burdens as well as slaves, and many a man who works by contract is doomed to an involuntary servitude, which he as thoroughly detests as the most faithless slave,” he reminded the congregation that included many of Charleston’s slaveholders.

²⁷⁶ Thornwell to William Robbins, Harvard University, Aug. 13, 1834, Thornwell Papers, SCL; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 195-6.

²⁷⁷ Thornwell, *Rights and the Duties of Masters*, 7.

“Overlooking, with a rare expansion of benevolence, the evils which press around their own doors, the vices and crimes and sufferings of their own natives and countrymen, the philanthropists of Europe,” Thornwell raged, “can find nothing worth weeping for but the sufferings and degradation of the Southern slave.” He had witnessed the poverty, resulting crime, and police repression of Liverpool’s free working class.²⁷⁸

Thornwell insisted that, in contradistinction to the abolitionist view, Christians could certainly view slavery as either a desirable or undesirable facet of society. “Slavery may evidently be contemplated in various aspects – as a social arrangement, involving a distinction of classes, like...European gradation of ranks,” he reasoned before the South Carolina Synod in 1852. “It may be opposed upon considerations of policy and prudence, as the...aristocracy of Europe, or the free institutions of America, are opposed, without the imputation of sin.” Thornwell, contrasting Great Britain and the South, congratulated himself upon the comparatively “free institutions” of his native land, but believed class distinctions a matter of national choice. Thornwell did not prefer the “European gradation of ranks” present in Britain, but they did not alarm him. His decision not to be presented at court to Queen Victoria while in London, for example, was not a republican notion, but primarily because he could not afford the steep price for the required attire.²⁷⁹

As a minister and Presbyterian Synod leader, the indignation of Christians from churches in Britain and the North deeply troubled Thornwell. Haynes attests that Northeastern “American religious groups” generally “followed suit” on the activities of “British reformers.” Thornwell no doubt noticed that once British Christians linked

²⁷⁸ Thornwell, *Rights and the Duties of Masters*, 7-8.

²⁷⁹ Thornwell, *Report on the Subject of Slavery, Presented to the Synod of South Carolina at their Sessions in Winnsborough, November 6, 1851* (Columbia, SC: Steam-Power Press of A.S. Johnston, 1852), 7-8; Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, London, July 2, 1841, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

antislavery to Christianity, Northerners followed their example. In the Presbyterian Assembly of 1847, held in Richmond, Thornwell wrote that “letters from the General Assembly of the Church in Ireland, and the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland” were read, and that “[t]hey were very strongly against slavery.” The presumption of these individuals of the United Kingdom, who seemed to ignore the squalid living conditions of their own poor, shocked him. “It is...preposterous in our Northern and European brethren to undertake to force their system upon us, or to break up our own in obedience to their notions,” he argued before his fellow Presbyterian leaders. Thornwell did not wish to see the sort of emotional, frenzied abolitionist beliefs he had witnessed in England disrupt traditional Presbyterian religious order and Christian unity. The minister feared the results of the impending separation; there was “a partial alienation, perhaps an eternal schism, among those who were as one in a common faith,” and he laid the blame at the abolitionists’ door. “The Southern churches have never asked their brethren in Europe, or in the non-slaveholding sections of their own land, to introduce slavery among them,” Thornwell declaimed indignantly.²⁸⁰

Feeling certain that justice would ultimately prevail and the Southern way of life would be vindicated, Thornwell exhorted a congregation that included Charleston elites; “[B]rethren of the South, go on in your present undertaking; and though our common enemies may continue to revile, you will be consolidating the elements of your social fabrick [sic], so firmly and compactly,” he encouraged, “that it shall defy the storms of

²⁸⁰ Thornwell, *Report on the Subject of Slavery*, 3; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 186-7; Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, May 27, 1847, in *Life and Letters*, 298; Thornwell, *Report on the Subject of Slavery*, 8.

fanaticism, while the...union, sympathy and confidence, among the different orders of the community, will be a standing reflection of all their accusations against us.”²⁸¹

Thornwell predicted misery for both the “fanatical” abolitionists and the divisive British and Northern churches. Resenting the years of effrontery, he declared to his Columbia congregation in 1860, “We do not envy them [the North and Europe] their social condition. With sanctimonious complacency they may affect to despise us, and to shun our society as they would shun the infection of a plague.” What he viewed as rank hypocrisy disgusted Thornwell, but he felt that the pride of anti-slavery nations would come to an end; “They may say to us, Stand by – we are holier than thou; but the day of reckoning must come,” he prophesied. “As long as the demand for labor transcends the supply, all is well; capital and labor are mutual friends, and the country grows in wealth with mushroom rapidity,” he explained. “But when it is no longer capital asking for labor, but labor asking for capital...then the tables are turned, and unemployed labor and selfish capital stand face to face in deadly hostility.” The oppressed people Thornwell had seen living in pantry-sized holes would emerge from the ground to fight the unjust system for their bread.²⁸²

C. The Future of Capitalism – Socialism and Communism

Another major theme in Thornwell’s post-European speeches, pamphlets, essays, and sermons was the prediction of impending doom for European and Northern societies in the form of socialism and communism, which he despised. He believed that capitalism, which was rapaciously impoverishing and starving the working class as he had seen in

²⁸¹ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 27, 51.

²⁸² James Henley Thornwell, *National sins: a fast-day sermon: preached in the Presbyterian church, Columbia, S.C., Wednesday, November 21, 1860* (Columbia: Southern Guardian Steam-Power Press, 1860), 71.

Britain, would lead to a working-class revolt and result in socialism and communism. Between the 1830s and the 1850s, some of the other Southern ideologues expressed similar concerns after European travel. “[S]outhern slaves were the best treated of laboring classes and war between capital and labor was inherent in the free labor system,” Fox-Genovese and Genovese state in explaining this line of reasoning. Some Southern writers “maintained that European workers and peasants, writhing in misery, would rebel against the abstractly sound laws of political economy.” From their point of view, “Society had to take care of its poor and incompetent, and there were two ways to do this – socialism, which had proven impractical, and personal servitude, which was withstanding all tests.”²⁸³

Although the prevailing capitalist system in Britain and the Continent was far different from socialism and communism, Thornwell saw a definite link between the two systems. His professor Cooper had also feared that the unfortunate conditions of British free workers would drive them to revolt. Referencing the European laboring class, Thornwell spoke to his Columbia congregation; “Where labor is free [as in capitalism], and the laborer not a part of the capital of the country [as in slavery], there are two causes constantly at work, which, in the excessive contrasts they produce, must end in agrarian revolutions and intolerable distress.” Explaining the impracticality of the free market system, he wrote, “The first is the tendency of capital to accumulate. Where it does not include the laborer as a part, it will employ only...labor which...yield[s] the largest returns. It looks to itself, and not to the interest of the laborer.” The constant working-class increase also proved problematic; “The multiplication of laborers not only reduces

²⁸³ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 83. Chapter 2, “Hewers of Wood, Drawers of Water,” describes this concern on the part of certain Southern elites.

wages to the lowest point, but leaves multitudes wholly unemployed.” Thornwell had seen numbers of starving children in Britain who, if they lived to be adults, would have a difficult time finding employment. Contrasting the disinterested slave owner with the avaricious capitalist, Thornwell exclaimed, “While the capitalist is accumulating his hoards, rolling in affluence and splendor, thousands that would work if they had the opportunity are doomed to perish of hunger.” Since the working-class would not tolerate starvation forever, a change would soon result.²⁸⁴

In Thornwell’s mind, capitalism could not indefinitely remain; there would either be a socialist-communist government, or the institution of slavery. “There is a point at which [human beings] will rise in desperation against a social order which dooms them to nakedness and famine, whilst their lordly neighbor is clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day,” Thornwell declared. In Liverpool and London, he had witnessed the juxtaposition of grandeur and squalor. “The government, therefore, must support them, or an agrarian revolution is inevitable,” he declared in 1860. The minister believed that, sooner or later, Europe and the North would be doomed to anarchy or have to implement an institution similar to that of the currently despised South. “[N]on-slaveholding [areas] will eventually have to organize labor, and to introduce something so like slavery that it will be impossible to discriminate between them,” Thornwell promised his readers, “or...suffer from the most violent and disastrous insurrections against the system which perpetuates and creates their misery [capitalism].” This fate “seems to be as certain as the tendencies in the laws of capital and population to produce the extremes of property and wealth,” to which Britain and Europe were, in Thornwell’s

²⁸⁴ Thornwell, *Fast-Day Sermon*, 33-4.

mind, living proof. His student, Laurence Keitt, would later echo his professor's words on the floor of the United States House of Representatives in 1858 (see chapter six.)²⁸⁵

Thornwell avowed that abolitionism was a part of socialist and communist philosophy, as both proposed the leveling of social classes. "The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders," he exclaimed in a sermon in the 1850s; "they are atheists, communists, red republicans, jacobins, on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other." As a minister, Thornwell saw the way abolitionists "insist upon the absolute equality of the species" as a form of atheism that ignored God's creation of society and property relations. The abolitionists "regard Society, with all its complicated interests, its divisions and sub-divisions, as the machinery of man," and "as [such it] may be taken to pieces, reconstructed, altered, and repaired, as experience shall indicate defects or confusion in the original plan," he explained to the Presbyterian synod. "The fundamental mistake of those who affirm slavery to be essentially sinful, is that" they assume "the duties of all men are essentially the same. As there are obviously duties of some men, in some relations, which cannot be practiced by a slave, they infer that the institution strips him of his rights, and curtails the fair proportions of his humanity." This method of creating total social equality echoed the aspersions the shipboard abolitionist cast on Southern society when he said that masters should "immediately be put to work" along with the slaves.²⁸⁶

Unlike capitalism or communism, which Thornwell believed altered social norms, he avowed that slavery was part of the social fabric and, therefore, unalterable:

"Mankind, for so many centuries, acquiesced in [the] system." Since "in defending this

²⁸⁵ Thornwell, *Fast-Day Sermon*, 34-5.

²⁸⁶ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 16; Thornwell, *Report on the Subject of Slavery*, 10-11, 40; Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 40.

institution we [the South] have really been upholding the civil interests of mankind – resisting alike the social anarchy of communism and the political anarchy of licentiousness,” Thornwell explained, the world would soon discover “that we [Southern society] have been supporting representative, republican government against the despotism of masses on the one hand, and the supremacy of a single will on the other.” Stephanie McCurry, in her brief discussion of Thornwell, states that, for him, the “stakes” of the proslavery-abolitionist “struggle...were no less than...the republic itself.” In short, “the defense of slavery incorporated a particular conception of republican government,” and “the defense of slavery and slavery republicanism” was inextricably linked “to the preservation of property rights and social order in all its class, racial, and gender peregrinations.” Thornwell wrote in one of his editorials in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, “We have always associated the idea of a high and glorious vocation with the planting of this Republic...[and] looked upon it...as a blessing to mankind.” He believed that his beloved American republic could not last under the mobocracy of anarchy or the totalitarianism of socialism and communism. For Thornwell, slavery ensured the purity of republicanism.²⁸⁷

Thornwell, connecting his memories of European laborers with then-current events, believed that there were definite signs of the coming downfall of the wage labor system. Although the turmoil in Great Britain did not equal the upheaval on the Continent, the British working class suffered through the era’s industrial changes and experienced frustration with their unsuccessful struggle for universal male suffrage across the class divide. “The agitations that are convulsing the kingdoms of Europe – the mad

²⁸⁷ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 14-19; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 211, 232, 234; Thornwell, ‘Critical Notices,’ *Southern Presbyterian Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Jan. 1851), 447.

speculations of philosophers – the excesses of unchecked democracy, are working out some of the most difficult problems of political and social science,” he wrote soon after the numerous European revolutions and upheavals in 1848. In a letter to a friend written in 1848, Thornwell specifically discussed the revolutionary turmoil in France: “The question of civil liberty is one of the...most interesting in the whole circle of political inquiry; and more mistakes exist in regard to it, than upon any point of political philosophy. France is now blundering, and I am afraid will continue to blunder, until her redemption becomes hopeless.” Thornwell had sympathized with the plight of Parisian laborers. Since the opposing sides of selfish capital and starving labor were now pitted against each other in France, democracy and mob rule loomed large, and the distance to communism was short. Daniel Kilbride remarks that Thornwell may have found the French revolution even more threatening because “the provisional government abolished slavery in France’s remaining West Indian possessions, further isolating American slave owners in the Atlantic World.”²⁸⁸

Complimenting and encouraging the South, to him the last bastion of sanity, Thornwell reminded his listeners, in an ironic and ill-fated prophecy, that the safe, humane nature of the slave society (as he saw it) would regain its respect in time. “[W]hen the tumult shall have subsided and reason resumed her ascendancy, it will be found that the very principles upon which we have been accustomed to justify Southern slavery, are the principles of regulated liberty,” he assured a congregation in the 1850s. Conversely, “in defending this institution we have really been upholding the civil interests of mankind.” Thornwell boasted of his section, “We do not hold our slaves in

²⁸⁸ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 12; Thornwell to Matthew Williams, Columbia, SC, July 17, 1848, in *Life and Letters*, 310; Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 129.

bondage from remorseless considerations of interest... We cherish the institution not from avarice, but from principle.” In this 1860 pamphlet which was widely disseminated and read in the South, Thornwell referred to the European nations that censored the South, and the North, which had imitated European labor relations. “[S]lavery is nothing but an organization of labor...[in] which labor and capital are made to coincide. Under this scheme, labor can never be without employment, and the wealth of the country is pledged to clothe and feed it.” Thornwell’s SCC students supported the “republic” of South Carolina’s right to hold slaves. Fearing that their socioeconomic systems would be reduced to those of Europe and the North, they served the Confederacy as politicians and as soldiers. Some died on the battlefield; others died inside themselves as their social framework was destroyed.²⁸⁹

D. The Ideal Society: Southern Paternalism

Of the themes that surface in Thornwell’s writings, the virtues of the Southern slave system and paternalism stand out as his favorite refrains. As an opponent of the capitalist system, which neglected the poor, and the socialist and communist social orders that he felt were en route to Europe and the North, the Southern ideologue endorsed instead what, to him, constituted the proper, and even pre-ordained, social order. The Southern elite had a responsibility to look after the “poor of our land” – as Thornwell defined the slave population in an 1847 publication – who were an integral part of their lives from birth to death.²⁹⁰

In order for abolitionist philosophers to defeat the institution’s morality, Thornwell felt they “must boldly attempt to prove that he ceases to be a man, who is

²⁸⁹ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 12; Thornwell, *Fast-Day Sermon*, 33.

²⁹⁰ Thornwell, *A Review of John B. Adger’s Sermon*, 5.

under obligation, without...a contract, to labour...for the benefit of another.” Believing this impossible to prove, he exhorted the Charleston congregation; “If society...has distinctly recognized the contrary as essential to good order, as in the case of children, apprentices and criminals, then slavery is consistent with the rights of man, and the pathetick [sic] declamation of abolitionists falls to the ground.” The minister wrote in 1852 that slaves belonged in the same category as children, who lacked the maturity to look after themselves, apprentices, who lacked the skills needed to support themselves, and criminals, who could not or would not control themselves. He believed that “slaves” were in the same category as “wives...and subjects,” including everyone but the male elite in the scheme of subordination within society. According to McCurry, this “stitching together of all social relations into the seamless fabric of southern society” not only preserved slavery but also the republic itself by “maintain[ing] the public sphere as a realm of perfect equality” of property-owning white males.²⁹¹

Thornwell, as a paternalist, avowed that slaves were not capable of caring for themselves and needed a father figure to provide for them, supervise their lives, and direct their activities. He defended his system in a letter to a fellow Presbyterian minister: “[The institution] is now domestic and patriarchal; the slave has all the family associations, and family pride, and sympathies of the master.” In contrast to working-class conditions in Europe and the North, to which abolitionists did not object, Thornwell posited slavery as relatively harmless. “[The slave] is born in the house, and bred with the children. The sentiments which spring from these circumstances, in the master and the slave, soften all the asperities of the relation, and secure obedience as a sort of filial

²⁹¹ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 35; Stephanie McCurry, “The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (Mar., 1992), 1249-50, 1260; Thornwell, *Report on the Subject of Slavery*, 6.

respect,” he wrote in 1856. In these conditions, “[it] is not much more harm to be a master than a father – a slave than a child,” Thornwell reasoned.²⁹²

Although Thornwell stood against the separation of slave families and encouraged others to do the same, he did not believe this to be a sufficient argument for abolition. “[H]e who would condemn the institution as essentially and inherently evil, because it sometimes incidentally involves the disruption of family ties, would condemn the whole texture of society in the non-slaveholding States” where “the separation of parents and children, of husbands and wives, is often a matter of stern necessity,” he exhorted the South Carolina Synod. Thornwell’s observations of begging mothers and fatherless children on the streets of Britain gave him proof that capitalism did not provide protection for the family unit or even the individual worker. Lieber, who greatly disliked Thornwell, nonetheless approved of the fact that Thornwell did not separate his slaves from their spouses. “Thornwell the new professor owns a cook,” Lieber wrote in his slavery notebook in 1837. When he relocated to the SCC campus at Columbia, however, Thornwell “[l]eft her behind because her husband belongs as usual to another” and hired another cook in her place. The professor not only indoctrinated his students in paternalism, but also remonstrated with them when they physically punished slaves (see chapter six.)²⁹³

As a dedicated Presbyterian minister, Thornwell believed that the Bible supported the concept of his own ideal society. In contradistinction to the arrangements between free labor in Britain and their employer-masters, who could hire and fire at will, leaving the worker to starve, Thornwell explained, the Bible stated that masters had a permanent

²⁹² Thornwell to John Adger, Dec. 10, 1856, in *Life and Letters*, 422-423.

²⁹³ Thornwell, *Report on the Subject of Slavery*, 6, 11, 16; Francis Lieber, “Slavery Notebook,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

contract with their slaves. “He [the Apostle Paul] considered slavery as a social and political economy, in which relations subsisted betwixt moral, intelligent, responsible beings, involving reciprocal rights and reciprocal obligations,” he explained to a congregation in the 1850s. In fact, “[r]eligion held the scale of justice between them – and enforced fidelity upon each by the awful sanctions of eternity.” God would punish masters who did not treat their slaves well, Thornwell promised. A letter Thornwell wrote his wife in 1847 reveals that he and other members of the Presbyterian Synod were agitating for stricter laws on slave treatment. “A large committee was appointed, of which I am chairman, to draw up a paper...on the subject of slavery, defining the true position of the Church, and suggesting means for rectifying some of the abuses and evils incidental to the institution. We shall probably recommend a petition to the Legislature, praying that a law may be enacted, to protect the family relations of the slave; and that the disgraceful statute, which prohibits them from learning to read, may be repealed.”²⁹⁴

E. Thornwell’s Slaves

According to the testimony of his contemporaries, Thornwell treated his plantation slaves humanely. Nancy Thornwell’s niece attested that, every summer, Thornwell and his family spent most of the season at the plantation to analyze “how their Agent was conducting affairs” and “the welfare of their slaves.” She testified that, in addition to being “an easy and indulgent master,” Thornwell “never could brag on his crops for he would not allow his servants to hurt themselves working, and if the Plantation supported [the slaves] he was satisfied.” Another contemporary, Benjamin Palmer, wrote that he was “doubtful if his slaves made their own support” in certain years

²⁹⁴ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 20-21; Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Oct. 20, 1847, in *Life and Letters*, 301.

and, in fact, “were often a tax upon him, rather than a source of revenue.” Thornwell was unusual in that, at least according to these firsthand testimonies, he placed greater importance on his slaves’ bodies and souls rather than in making a profit from their labor. As Farmer wrote, “Thornwell seems to have practiced what he preached about ministering to the slaves.”²⁹⁵

Since his Christian faith was supreme in his life, Thornwell ensured that his slaves would be well acquainted with religious truths. Palmer wrote, “He was exceedingly conscientious in securing to them every religious privilege, and contributed regularly to a minister, who made it a part of his duty to visit the place, to catechize and to preach.” His niece stated that a “man named Cauthen” preached to the slaves in their master’s absence. Palmer attested that the slaves were also “at perfect liberty to attend the sanctuary on the Sabbath.” In addition, “When present at the place, Dr. Thornwell was assiduous in the same work, as a catechist and preacher.”²⁹⁶

The minister strongly advocated the instruction of slaves in Biblical teaching and admitting them into the church – the same process used to educate whites of all classes in religion. “Invite them all to hear the Gospel, but receive them only after careful and thorough examination, into the membership. Let those who are admitted be built up in the faith,” he admonished his readers in an 1847 review, “not only by suitable preaching, but by the laborious and persevering catechetical teaching of them in private.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ [Witherspoon,] “1890s Document,” Thornwell Papers, SCL. Nancy Thornwell’s niece wrote this informal reminiscence about the family and ‘History of the Witherspoon Family’ on approximately forty pages of stationery in the 1890s. The exact date within the decade is not known; Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 342-3; Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy*, 229.

²⁹⁶ Palmer in Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 342-343.

²⁹⁷ Thornwell, *A Review of John B. Adger’s Sermon*, 6.

Thornwell's house slave, Amanda, is a good example of how he personally carried out his beliefs about slave ownership. In October 1849, holding a certificate stating that he had instructed her in Christian teaching, Amanda requested membership in Thornwell's Columbia Presbyterian Church. The board of elders examined her, and found her answers "more than usually satisfactory [concerning] the grounds of her faith and hope," and they "directed that she be publicly baptized...on [the] Sabbath." The official church minutes further record, "On Sabbath, October 7, the Ordinance of Baptism was administered to Amanda, Servant of Dr. Thornwell's." He also owned slaves Elsie, Eliza, Norah, Isaac, and certain "little negroes," although little is known about them.²⁹⁸

Spurred by the specter of scenes of suffering workers in Britain, Thornwell exhorted his fellow upper-class citizens to treat their working class, their slaves, humanely and decently. He believed that slaves were capable of "moral obligation and a sense of duty" and that slaves made a huge contribution to the lives of the elite: "From infancy to age, they attend on us – they greet our introduction into the world with smiles of joy, and lament our departure with a heartfelt sorrow." He further encouraged the Southern elite, both in the Charleston congregation and later readers of the published sermon, in humane slave treatment; "The solemn sanctions of religion [are] to enforce upon masters the necessity, the moral obligation, of 'rendering to their slaves that which is just and equal'...Food and raiment and shelter their interests will prompt them to provide," he explained, "but as the labour of the slave is expended for their benefit, they are bound, by the double consideration of justice and mercy, to care for his soul." Thornwell's concern for the souls of slaves was a far cry from the behavior of many

²⁹⁸ "Columbia Presbyterian Church Minutes," Oct. 1849, SCL; *Life and Letters*, 444.

British factory owners, who did not even care for the well-being of their workers' bodies.²⁹⁹

Throughout his career, Thornwell asserted the superiority of the slave system and reminded masters to care for their slaves physically and spiritually. “[W]e accept as a good and merciful constitution the organization of labor which Providence has given us in slavery,” Thornwell stated on behalf of the South in 1860. “We see in it a security for the rights of property and a safeguard against pauperism and idleness, which our traducers may yet live to wish had been engrafted upon their own institutions.” He reminded his Columbia congregation, “Our slaves are a solemn trust, and while we have a right to use and direct their labor, we are bound to feed, clothe, and protect them,” Thornwell cautioned his Columbia congregation, “to give them the comforts of this life, and to introduce them to the hopes of a blessed immortality.”³⁰⁰

Conclusion

James Henley Thornwell’s first trip abroad to Europe in 1841 profoundly influenced his life and work. Both in his journal and letters, he recorded his astonishment and pity on encountering the poverty, squalor, and starvation of the working-classes, particularly in Britain. Thornwell also discussed his impression of British abolitionists as

²⁹⁹ Thornwell, *Rights and Duties of Masters*, 5-6, 19-20, 47-8.

³⁰⁰ Thornwell, *Fast-Day Sermon*, 35, 38; Thornwell, *Life and Letters*, 482-3. On one occasion late in life, Thornwell briefly wavered in his support for slavery. Benjamin Palmer, editor of Thornwell’s letters, summarized a letter Thornwell wrote during his second trip to Europe in 1860. Out of fear for his country’s welfare, Thornwell wrote to Palmer that he “had made up his mind to move, immediately upon his return, for the gradual emancipation of the negro, as the only measure that would give peace to the country.” In “James Henley Thornwell’s Mysterious Antislavery Moment,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Aug. 1991), 383-406, William Freehling attributed this aberration to an intense fear of a bloody war that would destroy the South and perhaps the entire country. This fear motivated Thornwell to take emancipation into account, not a change of heart concerning the institution of slavery. On his return from Europe, he found the South in an irrational frenzy and saw that “it was too late” to advocate emancipation; “the die was cast,” he explained to Palmer. Thornwell then actively supported the Confederate cause, even leading in prayer at the first secession council. Upholding the Confederate cause, he died in 1862 at the age of forty-nine before the conflict was resolved.

radicals who possessed little reasoning power and failed to see the misery in their own nation. These impressions of abolitionism and the working class in Europe strengthened his proslavery beliefs.

After his return to South Carolina, Thornwell became an outspoken defender and proponent of slavery. In published sermons, periodicals, and speeches, he championed the argument that slaves were well provided for in comparison to the European working class. Fearing for the safety and happiness of the worker under the free labor system, he felt that slavery was a humane alternative. He was a proponent of a feudalistic form of government, as found in the South, as opposed to capitalism with its free workers, as practiced in Britain. As a professor, he encouraged his students to preserve the socioeconomic status quo in South Carolina and the region. Thornwell preached and wrote in favor of humane slave treatment, believing that the upper classes were responsible for looking after the poor. The minister encouraged his listeners to give their slaves what was “just and equal,” including food, shelter, and religious instruction, in contradistinction to the unfortunate working class of Great Britain and Europe. His widely influential speeches and published writings, well-known and respected in his day, strongly bore the mark of his transatlantic experiences.

Thornwell’s second visit to Europe in 1860 reinforced his belief that Southern slaves had better lives than the British working class. He specifically thought of his slave, Charles, during his time abroad. Charles served as Thornwell’s valet and his “faithful carriage driver” for many years, and contemporaries wrote that he was fond of Charles and placed “great confidence” in him. After leaving London, Thornwell wrote to his wife from Geneva, “The work among the negroes is one in which I feel a special interest, and I

do sincerely pray that Charles may be led to the knowledge of true religion. For his faithfulness in my absence, I intend to bring him a handsome present.” The British system did not provide its free workers with enough food to eat, but Thornwell would even purchase a “handsome present” for his enslaved worker.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Thornwell to Nancy Thornwell, Geneva, Aug. 25, 1860, in *Life and Letters*, 461; [Witherspoon], “1890s Document,” Thornwell Papers, SCL; Thornwell to A.J. Witherspoon, Columbia, Dec. 28, 1859, in *Life and Letters*, 444.

CHAPTER FOUR

“WOULD TO GOD WE WERE BLACK”: WILLIAM CAMPBELL PRESTON’S SYMPATHY AT THE CALL OF SUFFERING EUROPEAN PAUPERS AND HIS SUPPORT FOR SOUTHERN SLAVERY

William Campbell Preston, member of the Virginia gentry and alumnus of South Carolina College (SCC), embarked on a two-year European tour in 1817 at age twenty-three. Personal encounters with suffering Irish peasants not only moved him to empty his pockets, but also stamped a lifelong impression upon his mind that fomented into a staunch support of the proslavery Southern philosophy and its attendant paternalism. His travels in Italy further stocked his memory with scenes of destitution suffered by the poorest Continental classes. In Paris, however, Preston learned what was, to him, a life-changing lesson when he encountered a South Carolina slave, Jack, whose traveling owner had abandoned him over four thousand miles from home without sufficient support. Preston and his friend, Hugh Swinton Legaré, assumed what they considered to be their natural responsibility and came to Jack’s rescue. The disregarded Irish and Italian peasants’ hopelessness, when compared with the assistance Jack received, solidified and intensified Preston’s trust in the paternalistic care that he believed slavery offered the Southern working class.

Viewing the anti-democratic governments of England, France, and Italy increased Preston’s commitment to Jeffersonian republicanism and pride in his Virginia, and later South Carolina, state citizenship. He believed that the repressive nature of European governments encouraged pauperism, such as the English domination of the Irish, the

police state in France, and the absolutist Roman Catholic government in the Italian provinces. These sights in Europe encouraged his later support of states' rights doctrines, laissez-faire economics, and the protective social infrastructure of southern slavery.

After returning home and relocating to South Carolina, Preston's high-profile career included representing Richland County, South Carolina, in the State House during the 1820s; eight years as United States Senator from 1834-1842; six years as president and professor of SCC from 1846-1851; and a retired but actively influential private citizen from 1852 until his death in 1860. During the 1820s and 1830s tariff controversy, he agitated alongside prominent political leaders like Thomas Cooper and David McCord to protect South Carolinians from Northern economic policies that would minimize Southern profits. As one of the foremost orators of his day, he defended southern rights against what he saw as European and Northern aggression through memorable speeches in Congress, later published and widely read. While in Washington, Preston vigorously fought for the rights he felt South Carolina and the South deserved, particularly the right to own slaves and be spared from abolitionist insults in Congress. As president and professor of SCC, Preston won the hearts of his students with his leadership qualities, oratorical and literary abilities, and genuine sympathy with them.

Several of Preston's writings illuminate his persona. Just before his death in 1860, Preston wrote *The Reminiscences of William Campbell Preston*, which features a detailed account of his European travels. His piece against the tariff, *A Letter to the Honorable James Brown, Senator in Congress from the state of Louisiana, On the Tariff, By an Inhabitant of the South*, written and published in 1823, delineated the supreme importance he placed on the republican independence of South Carolina and the value of

American agriculture over a full-scale British manufacturing economy. Two of Preston's major Congressional speeches, *The Abolition Question* (1836) and *The Annexation of Texas* (1838), provide essential proof of his opinions regarding the abolitionist "frenzy," its origin in Britain and subsequent spread to the North, and its threat to the Southern way of life. In addition, his personal correspondence illuminates the understanding of his personal philosophy of slavery, his relationships with his own slaves, and his conception of the independent Southern state.³⁰²

Born into a prestigious Virginia family in 1794, Preston was reared among slaves and prominent slaveholders. His father was a United States congressman from Virginia, his mother was a niece of Patrick Henry, and his grandfather was a Revolutionary War hero. George Washington and James and Dolley Madison were members of his family's circle of friends. The Preston family's "salt works" netted a healthy profit each year. Records indicate that Francis Preston, his father, inherited and purchased slaves who labored at the salt works. At fifteen, Preston visited Columbia, South Carolina, with his personal slave, Isaac. After discussing the prospect with Isaac, who approved of his master's plan, Preston began his studies at SCC, graduating in 1812. The college and the city would remain integral to him throughout his life.³⁰³

³⁰² Far less secondary material exists concerning Preston as compared to the studies of Cooper, Lieber, or Thornwell. Edwin L. Green, University of South Carolina professor during the first half of the twentieth century, researched and wrote a rough draft of a Preston biography in the 1930s and 1940s, which constitutes an incomplete biography of Preston's life as opposed to an historical analysis. Nonetheless, it is a useful reference for certain factual details. The few historiographies that include Preston, such as Daniel Kilbride's *Being American in Europe* and Michael O'Brien's *Conjectures of Order*, do not focus on him, but mention a segment of his life to further a larger argument.

³⁰³ William Preston, *The Reminiscences of William C. Preston*. Minnie Clare Yarborough, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 1-7; "Indenture of William Preston," March 29, 1811, Library of Congress Microfilm, Reel 2, Vol. 4, VHS; "Account Book, 1812-1823," Campbell-Preston Papers, Library of Congress Microfilm, Reel 6, VHS; Sarah B. Preston Account Book, 1835, Campbell-Preston Papers; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 293.

After college, Preston spent a few years traveling through Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, and Missouri on business for his father. He brought a “servant”, Charles, with him, but sent him back to Virginia before visiting Ohio due to warnings from acquaintances. “Temptations are held out by the people sufficient to seduce the most faithful and tho[ugh] my reliance and confidence in Charles is very great...I am afraid to subject him to the trial,” Preston confided to his father. Although he felt affection for Charles, Preston feared the black slave might prove biologically incapable of resisting the “temptations” held out to him.³⁰⁴

After his return from the “far West,” Preston traveled abroad for a two-year coming-of-age tour common to his caste. His father, who financed the journey, felt that his son required this finishing touch to his education and experience. Michael O’Brien, in discussing Preston’s sojourn in Europe as an example of Southerners’ travels abroad, states that the young man came to obtain an education, which was “typical of his generation,” driven by “his sense that a future lawyer and politician should know the European world.” The historian praises Preston’s account of his European experiences: “Preston had a great gift for observation and anecdote, chosen with care and related with a lazy grace, and nowhere is there a better relation of the young male Southerner of privilege out in the world with his friends, meeting all hazards and people with an interested and skeptical smile.” While Preston learned a great deal about literature, history, art, and law while in Europe, his experiences also deepened his commitment to the paternalistic slave system and the Southern socioeconomic structure.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Green, Preston Biographical Manuscript, Green Papers, SCL; Preston to Francis Preston [father], Sept. 22, 1816, Library of Congress Microfilm, Reel 2, Vol. 5, VHS.

³⁰⁵ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 105, 151. See pages 100-109 for comments on Preston’s travels in Europe. O’Brien summarizes Preston’s time in Europe, lists the places he visited, mentions some of his

I. Travel in Europe

A. Scenes of the European Poor

Preston viewed many downtrodden individuals during his years abroad, but the Irish poor inspired his most profound impressions. After crossing the Atlantic, Preston's ship docked in Ireland for a short time, but most passengers remained on board in anticipation of the official disembarkation at Liverpool. Impetuously, Preston decided to see something of Ireland and then rejoin his fellow travelers in Liverpool. Borrowing "some loose coin" and leaving the rest of his belongings on board, Preston hurried out for his first encounter with the Old World. The following morning, Preston witnessed a sobering scene outside his lodging house window.³⁰⁶

"[L]ooking upon the public square," Preston later wrote, "I found it covered with a dense crowd of sturdy and stalwart peasants, with a patient but surly air." Comparing their treatment and position in society to that of farm animals, he recounted, "They filled the enclosure of the square like cattle in a pound." He discovered that these peasants traveled from a nearby neighborhood to work as farmhands in the coming harvest and were waiting for landowners to engage them for labor. "They stood there all day. Some seemed to be provided with a scant allowance of food, many without any." Preston walked downstairs to assess the situation more closely. "Several were employed by gentlemen, who came and inspected them and took such as they fancied," not unlike a slave auction. Although there was no negotiation of terms, the peasants were desperate enough to follow any employer.³⁰⁷

travelling companions, and mentions a few specific events, but does not mention Preston's personal experience with the poor or even his republicanism, both fostered during his travels abroad.

³⁰⁶ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 23-24.

³⁰⁷ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 25.

Although Preston had come from his ship with little money, his compassion for the unfortunate individuals drove him to action. Seeing a cartload of bread, Preston asked one of the laborers to negotiate the sale of the cart's contents and to divide the bread between his fellows. Since the "bread was very dry," Preston also purchased "three tin buckets" and "a couple of tankards" of beer for the laborers. The peasants toasted Preston and his nation, the United States. In addition to the peasant laborers, which made a sober scene in themselves, Preston recounted that, in addition, "[a]ll round the square were crowds of women and children, most importunate beggars." He handed out coins to the beggars until his "last copper was exhausted." As a result, he was short of cash until he arrived in Liverpool and had access to the rest of his belongings.³⁰⁸

Continuing on his journey through Ireland, Preston found it in a state of deep political unrest. In a coach bound for Dublin, Preston observed "a great fat man rolled up in a drab great coat" on the front of the coach "and an equally fat man in a bright red wescoat [sic] with metal buttons [who] was the guard." Their fatness was in evident contrast to the leanness of the peasants Preston had seen earlier that day. Ready to silence any stray rebels, the policeman "had two large pistols in his belt and a carbine lying on the coach beside him." In addition, "a file of dragoons rode up on either side." Preston's coach companions told him that "the military escort...was for protection through a country of extreme disorganization and turbulence which had been recently put under the ban of the insurrection law, called the Peel Act." This recent development was yet another example of British subjugation of the Irish. "Curious to see a population in this condition of turbulence and enforced suppression," Preston recounted, "I left the coach

³⁰⁸ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 25-26.

that I might...visit Cahir Castle and Cahir Cottage and then traverse leisurely the disaffected territory.”³⁰⁹

The grandeur of Cahir was at once apparent to the Southerner. “Cahir Cottage is an exquisite exhibition of taste and luxury, built on the summit of a rock, round which is made earth for shrubbery and gardens, the rock is perforated through and through for galleries and grottos – and the gem of a house finished and furnished with whatever the wantonness of wealth could buy.” The castle was no less grand; “Cahir Castle was the first I saw of those large stone monuments of feudal times, which had always filled my imagination with wonder and romance,” Preston testified.³¹⁰

In striking contradistinction to this grandeur, “The neighborhood was in a state of starvation and necessarily so demoralized that there were daily shooting[s] and hanging[s]. There were several gibbets from which bodies were dangling, one having as many as three,” Preston recalled. Due to recently increased fears of insurrection, “a military police was stationed in the country with power to arrest and try summarily before a court-martial [those] persons suspected of crime or misdemeanor, with power to shoot, hang, or transport them.” As Preston rode through the counties of Limerick and Tipperary in his carriage, the peasants displayed considerable fear, mistaking him for an Englishman. “I often saw peasants flying from the approach of my carriage and when I visited a hut the man slipped out the back way and the surly woman would pretend not to understand English.” Preston found a way to deal with the problem; “An assurance that I was not a *Peeler*, but an American, generally restored confidence, which was confirmed when I gave a sixpence.” Preston may well have mused that, although Southern

³⁰⁹ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 26-27.

³¹⁰ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 26-27.

plantation homes were large and luxurious, the farm laborers were not in the thoroughfares begging for assistance from strangers, but were the master's "people" whom he fed, clothed, and housed.³¹¹

The Irish peasants allowed Preston to view their dwellings. "The interior of the huts was of indescribable squalor, revolting and horrid – in one corner generally a pile of half-rotten potatoes, at the door sill a mud hole, piles of filthy rags in the corners, children naked, and not one item of comfort or necessity," Preston remembered. As he traveled "through such scenes" on his way to Dublin, Preston contrasted the scenery with the situation. "My route lay thro a fine country, the lands were rich and highly cultivated, and the landscape beautiful." This natural bounty, however, was wasted; "Beggary, starvation, crime, and punishment were on every side." He had been so generous that, had he not met with a kinsman in Dublin, he may have had great difficulty in traveling to Liverpool, since his belongings and letters of credit remained on shipboard. This relative "had letters of introduction and money, both of which I wanted," he recalled, "for the small quantity of coin I had brought from the ship had been drawn from me by the beggary and want along the road." It is not surprising that, ten years later in Columbia, Preston joined the Friends of Ireland Club. "The Friends of Ireland held a meeting in March 1829 at the Town Hall for the purpose of forming a society to succor the sufferers in Ireland...Preston, who always had a soft spot in his heart for the Irish, was elected president of the society," Edwin Green wrote.³¹²

Preston, reloaded with coin, made his way toward Liverpool. "When I got to the wharf to take the packet for Holyhead, a piteous spectacle was presented. It was a jam of

³¹¹ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 27.

³¹² Preston, *Reminiscences*, 27-29; Green, Preston Biographical Manuscript, 65.

poor and sturdy peasants, trying to get on board for going over to England, to get work in the harvest.” Many of them could not afford the passage, but waited hopefully. “The owner of the packet had put the passage at half price and at the instant that the bar was removed enough [persons] to cover the whole deck rushed on.” Several laborers lacked even this small sum “and when notice [was] given that such should not be landed at Holyhead, many struggled back.” Even with this thinning of the ranks, Preston testified, “the crowd aboard was prodigious and squalid. The pay passengers bought all the bread in the vessel for their use, and I was drained of my money so as to leave barely enough for me to get to Liverpool on the outside of the coach.”³¹³

From his exposed seat, Preston endured the elements. “It rained heavily and incessantly the whole way and before we got to the City I was seized with a chill which shook me with great violence,” he remembered. Due to his earlier generosity to the impoverished Irish workers, Preston arrived at Liverpool “with but two and sixpence in my pocket.” For several days, the young man was delirious with fever, and might have died had it not been for the ministrations of Washington Irving, who had received a letter from Thomas Jefferson asking him to look after his family friend. Preston traveled extensively in England after his recovery, spending time in Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, and London. Michael O’Brien mentions that other Southerners shared feelings similar to Preston’s when they visited the British Isles: “Liverpool [was] impressive but dirty, an immediate lesson...The poverty was intimidating, ominous.” London also demonstrated specters of glorious wealth and terrible poverty. “Southward lay more contradictions: industry in Manchester and Birmingham, coal mines in the Black Country, feudalism at Warwick...Energy, squalor, vestiges, modernity, it was all

³¹³ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 31-32.

confusing, often repulsive. Southerners who stayed home were more prone to Anglophilia; travelers seldom were.” The spectacle of want Preston observed in the United Kingdom flashed back to his mind when he spoke on the threat of abolitionism to Southern institutions and Britain’s influence on the North in the United States Senate.³¹⁴

Working class conditions were, if anything, worse on the Continent. During his time in Italy, Preston remarked upon the “paupers” and “beggars” that seemed ubiquitous. Urban and rural peasants alike struggled in a time of economic hardship. Historian John A. Davis explains, “[L]arge farms grew at the expense of smaller, independent peasant farms, while the number of landless labourers rose. The insecurity of the rural population increased, causing unemployment, vagrancy, crime, and banditry to grow.” Transitions from feudalism to private land caused peasants to suffer still more, as they lost grazing and hunting rights. “Unprecedented rates of population growth,” Davis continues, “brought further pressure on land and resources that were already inadequate to support an increasingly impoverished rural population.” The people of Lombardy and Venetia, areas through which Preston traveled, suffered through the 1816-1818 famine during his visit.³¹⁵

Preston juxtaposed his observations of the extreme poverty in Italy with his comparatively positive view of Florence. “The lower classes of Florence and the province of Tuscany were better looking, seemed more contented and happy than I had seen elsewhere.” In other words, outside of Tuscany, the peasantry was discontented, even

³¹⁴ *Reminiscences*, 31-32; Minnie C. Yarborough, “Preston’s Rambles with Irving,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. XXIX, no. 4, Oct. 1930), 432; O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 106, 109. In a list of examples, O’Brien quotes Preston’s disdain for prideful English reticence and their refusal to accept worthy Americans into their society.

³¹⁵ John A. Davis, “Economy, Society, and the State,” and David Laven, “The Age of Restoration,” in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796-1900*, John A. Davis, ed. (NY: Oxford University Press, 2000,) 64, 237-238.

miserable. Preston continued, “The eye was offended by fewer priests, prostitutes, and paupers than in any Italian town.” Blaming Italy’s repressive Catholic government for the negative situation, Preston remarked, “The three classes bear a natural relation to each other, they flourish under the same form of religion – and civil polity.”³¹⁶

O’Brien categorizes Preston’s disgust for Catholicism as typical of Southern travelers. “Few had good words for the Roman Catholic Church. Despotism, cruelty, superstition, parasitism, were its characteristics.” In a letter to his friend Irving, Preston noted, in contrast to English opinion, that Napoleon had improved Rome by curbing the power of the Catholic Church. He lamented that the Frenchman was no longer in power; he “was suppressing the convents, he was introducing the useful arts, he was employing the poor in repairing the highways, or in rescuing the monuments of antiquity from the ruins...but under the spiritless and paralyzing domination of priests, everything languishes.” Praising Napoleon as if he were an eighteenth-century FDR with a “New Deal” for the people of Rome, Preston revealed his own deep concern for the human destitution that he witnessed.³¹⁷

Even Italy’s skilled working class presented a depressed standard of living. When he and two friends visited Rome, they rented a “desolate sort of palace of sixteen rooms” for the week. No sooner than they took possession, “a crowd of menials, lackeys, and all sorts of persons tendered their services, and begged to be employed.” Preston and his two traveling companions hired six and remained in the palace with these inexpensive but talented servants for two months. During Preston’s sojourn in the capital city, he remarked on “the strange preponderance in the population of priests, prostitutes, and

³¹⁶ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 112.

³¹⁷ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 682; Preston to Washington Irving, Rome, March 16, 1818, Preston Papers, VHS.

beggars – these constituted the populace.” He had obviously expected less want in a city of such splendor.³¹⁸

Comparing one group of oppressed individuals sympathetically to the “finer mulattos” of his native region, he remarked “I was greatly struck with the stalwart proportion and muscular development of the Lazzaroni [who possess] a certain swagger and effrontery, resembling that of the finer mulattos of the Southern States. They did not seem to be inclined to offend or to submit to offence.” Recently, Preston believed, the Lazzaroni “had in some sort reformed their morals” as a result of being engaged “as soldiers and as laborers, on the public works.” The Lazzaroni thus, according to Preston, “imbibed a feeling of maintaining themselves otherwise than on charity or by stealing, debasing conditions.” He praised them as “a fierce and...courageous population.” The Virginian noted that they had “in some degree escaped some vices – such as cowardice, treachery and lying.” His analysis demonstrates a greater sympathy with both the Lazzaroni and southern mulattos than many Southerners evinced. Fox-Genovese and Genovese note, “In Italy, Southerners could not believe the condition of the Neapolitan poor (lazzaroni); in various spellings ‘lazzaroni’ became the code word for wretchedly poor people prone to crime as well as idleness and begging.”³¹⁹

Although Kilbride does not touch on Preston’s personal experiences in this particular area, he confirms that other Americans of the early republic found the phenomenon of European poverty horrifying. “Travelers experienced continental poverty as an assault on multiple senses, which helps account for why so many of them remarked on it. They saw beggars, of course, but they also heard their cries for aid, felt their rough

³¹⁸ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 77-80.

³¹⁹ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 95.

hands as they reached for alms, remarked on their foul odor, and even...speculated on their diet.” In common with Preston, “[m]ost travelers ascribed the misery of the European poor to oppressive government.” France and Italy, nations that Preston also visited, elicited negative responses from other visitors. “Beggars – men, women, and children whom to all appearances had neither occupation nor residence – seemed especially prevalent in France and Italy.” An American traveler, “Francis Kinloch, making an observation that would become commonplace among proslavery ideologues, thought that laborers in northern Italy ‘make a more miserable appearance than our negroes.’”³²⁰

Preston believed that slaves enjoyed better lives under the care and protection of their masters than the miserable existence of the free people of Europe, and this conviction was intensified after meeting Jack, a recently freed Southern slave, in Paris. “There was a negro man named Jack who attached himself pertinaciously to me and [Hugh Swinton] Legaré and became a real attaché,” Preston wrote, demonstrating Jack’s preference in the matter – he did not *want* to be free. Wage labor had treated Jack badly; “He had been brought over from Charleston as a servant to an old Jew named Sasportas” due to Sasportas’ temporary blindness. Jack’s master, “upon being couched and restored to his sight dismissed Jack, according to contract, with a month’s wages.” Even though Jack had enough money to support himself for a while, he could not cope with life on his own. “One evening in the Palais Royal,” Preston remembered, “we met Jack, who having

³²⁰ Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 52, 62, 67-68, 75. In discussing Preston’s trip abroad, Kilbride emphasizes the Southern traveler’s dislike of Great Britain, his love of the United States, and his republicanism, which led him to criticize British and European governments. Along with valuable insight on Americans who were Preston’s contemporary travelers, he validates the importance of Preston’s years abroad in shaping his persona. He does not, however, mention his observation of the poor or his proslavery philosophy.

known Legaré in Charleston rushed upon him like a lost dog who finds his master, and caressing and fawning upon him, manifested the utmost delight.” Jack, in Preston’s view, was no more fit to take care of himself than a lost pet would be, and behaved much like a domesticated animal on reuniting with his owners.³²¹

In their opinions, Jack would have been in danger of starvation without the paternalistic assistance of a white male southerner. Preston’s next revealing lines state that the former slave “declar[ed] that he had not eaten for some days, for altho[ugh] he had eight dollars in his pocket, he could not ask for anything to eat, as these folks [the French] understand nothing but their own gibberish.” Legaré and Preston, having enjoyed the education of white male aristocrats which had been denied to Jack, spoke French well and arranged food for the former slave. After the experience, Jack became their shadow: “Jack made a trio with us.”³²²

In addition to a lack of life skills, Preston also found Jack deficient in culture and aesthetic appreciation. Jack “always compared whatever he saw in Paris disparagingly with what was in Charleston,” the Southern traveler recounted. Although Preston preferred Virginia and South Carolina to Paris overall, he considered France far more beautiful than his home states. “Thus it happened that one early morning we were walking through the Place Vendôme when the morning rays had about half descended the bronze column, in the center, and were tinging the tall houses on the opposite side, we having from our stand point a glimpse of the sun shine on the Tuileries garden,” Preston remembered, “I turned to Jack and said, ‘You rascal, did you ever see anything as beautiful as this?’ He quietly answered, ‘Mars Preston, all very pretty, but were you ever

³²¹ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 65-66.

³²² Preston, *Reminiscences*, 65-66.

in Charleston, up towards Cooter Bridge?” Preston and Jack observed their traditional Southern roles even while in Paris, Preston calling the slave a “rascal” and Jack calling the white Southern gentleman “Mars.”³²³

Preston and Legaré recalled the conversation when back in the United States. “Several years after[ward,] Legaré and I went to explore Jack’s high place at Cooter Bridge. There were a few wooden shanties by the side of a canal filled with water.” Preston was not surprised by Jack’s lack of cultural discernment. “[B]ut it was Jack’s birth place,” he reflected with a note of paternalistic sympathy. It is interesting to note that, like Preston, Legaré’s thinking was altered by his time in France and he, too, firmly believed that the slaves’ situation stood far superior to that of Europe’s starving, government-oppressed laborers. Fox-Genovese and Genovese mention that “in 1831, the worldly and moderate Hugh Legaré...pointed to Lyons, where 15,000 workers fought pitched battles with the National Guard and suffered 600 casualties” in a written defense of Southern society’s labor system.³²⁴

B. The Police State v. Republican Government

In addition to pondering the situation of the poor in Europe, while observing what seemed, to him, the relatively preferable condition of a slave well cared for by Southern gentlemen, Preston also observed Europe’s repressive governments close at hand, and his commitment to classical republicanism and states’ rights deepened. That commitment would later inspire him to fight against federal encroachment on South Carolina’s state rights and train the next generation of leaders to follow the same pattern. He directly connected the harshness of the English government to the Irish plight and the despotism

³²³ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 65-66.

³²⁴ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 65-66; Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 53.

of Catholic political rulers to Italian peasant misery. The young Virginian deplored the French police state even more. Preston also developed the concept that a person's native state, as opposed to the United States, should be his nation of first allegiance, which proved a permanent conviction with him.

With an antebellum Southern gentleman's sensibilities, he developed a definite disdain for the English during his sojourn. He specifically disliked "the English reticence...a surly and ill mannered and unsympathizing manner. It is a national character resulting from the false and foolish notion that true dignity is to be always on the watch for aggression...All emotion is vulgar and ardor horrible." This uncaring attitude dovetailed well with British abuse of the Irish, symbolized by the two fat, snugly clothed guards Preston had encountered in Ireland. When Preston and his friend Washington Irving stopped at an inn near Loch Achray in Scotland, the proprietor mistakenly called them Englishmen. On being corrected, he gave them free rooms for the night by way of apology, which no doubt reinforced Preston's already lively idea of the English in the area. He later remarked in a letter from Edinburgh that Scotland had "[n]o court to refine them with polished nothingness – no wealth to debauch them into English brutality."³²⁵

Preston experienced the French police state firsthand and heartily disapproved. Kilbride states that, although American visitors "saw France as Catholic, morally corrupt, poor, and despotic," they also viewed "France as different" because "above all other European nations, Americans believed it to be the best hope for republicanism." This was certainly not the case for Preston. Due to "some suspected informality in our passports," the border guards arrested Preston and an old SCC chum, Andrew Govan. Although the

³²⁵ Yarborough, "Preston's Rambles with Washington Irving," 426; Preston, *Reminiscences*, 47; Preston to Lieutenant O'Connor, Edinburgh, Dec. 1818, Preston Papers, SCL.

policeman allowed Preston and Govan to contact the American ambassador, he nonetheless restricted them to the town of Calais until the matter was settled. “All this was...a sudden and thorough initiation into a system very different from anything we had ever seen,” Preston remarked, making a clear differentiation between the French “republic” and the early American republic. After Albert Gallatin sent a note clearing the two young men, the policeman “came with many professions of politeness and sorrow – that which he was pleased to call the unnecessary sensibility of the police had made it his unpleasant duty, etc.” Preston was keenly aware of the irony between the policeman’s polite manner and the reality of police power. He later warned a friend from Edinburgh, “The French Police is [a] military and political inquisition as the Spanish inquisition is mainly a religious Police. If the slightest suspicion should fall on you or indeed from mere wantonness, these [police] might take a fancy to read your letters and you know – it is only under a government of Law that a waxen seal is as strong as adamant.”³²⁶

The two SCC graduates experienced a still fiercer display of European police power while traveling in Italy. While visiting Naples, Preston and Govan were riding in a carriage when it collided into the back of the carriage ahead. A large man with a stiletto jumped from the other carriage and fought with their driver. After the two young men subdued this aggressive man, they discovered that he was a police officer. Eight soldiers carried Preston and Govan to the police department, placing them in a room with an iron-barred balcony. The policemen lied, claiming that the subdued officer had been beaten nearly to death and that it was Govan who actually drew a stiletto. Standing outside on the iron-clad balcony for a moment during the trial, Govan whispered to Preston, “Do

³²⁶ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 50-51; Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 58; Preston to O’Connor, Dec. 1818, Preston Papers, SCL.

you remember that man we saw in prison yesterday who had been there for thirty years until the offence charged upon him was forgotten?”³²⁷

The American government hurried to remove Preston and Govan from Naples’ anti-republican clutches. “The consul entered in full feather with his regimentals and a huge sword by his side [and shouted,] ‘I have come to demand these my countrymen, in the name of the United States of America.’” Preston remarked dryly, “The palatine was struck with awe, having an instinctive deference to one with a sword and a uniform.” Although the consul and an attorney assisted the travelers, the case remained open. “We learned thro the Judge that it had been the subject of conversation amongst the palace menials and may have reached the royal ears,” Preston remembered. After conferring with the Minister of Affairs, Preston and Govan decided to escape to Rome by boat. These experiences with the Continental police powers instilled an even greater love within Preston for the republican system, influenced him to resist federal and Northern power over South Carolina, and influenced his identification with his state first and his country second.³²⁸

Preston took pride in his state citizenship while abroad; he would later encourage this pride with his SCC students. During his contretemps with the Neapolitan police, an interpreter advised Preston to say he was English to make an end to the trouble, but he refused. Still more strongly, he identified with his status as a Virginian and a Southerner, demonstrating that quality of antebellum Southern sectionalism which reflected Southern aristocrats’ vision of their states as separate countries long before secession. A new French acquaintance said to Preston. “Vous êtes monsieur de la Province de Virginia

³²⁷ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 95-105.

³²⁸ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 96-105.

[You are a gentleman of the province of Virginia].” “No Sir, of the State,” Preston corrected his Parisian friend. O’Brien notes this phenomenon of state over national identity, mentioning as example William Trescot of South Carolina, who wrote during the decade, “Whatever [an American’s] pride in his nationality, his home instincts and affections are bounded by State lines.” In 1851, David Ramsey, a South Carolinian abroad, tried to convince a European that he “had the honour to be a citizen...of that State [SC] & that it was decidedly the most important in the Confederacy.” Briefly mentioning Preston’s example of state pride, O’Brien remarks, “No doubt, Preston’s and Ramsey’s interlocutors would have been surprised to discover with what assiduity and sophistication were theories of the modern state, drawn from Machiavelli, Locke, or Harrington applied to places like Virginia and South Carolina, trifling districts to the European, but moral universes even to cosmopolitans like Preston and Ramsay.”³²⁹

Kilbride gives a similar reading of Preston’s reaction to Catholicism while in Italy. He states that Preston’s belief that the Catholic Church was not only a form of despotism and servility, but also the antithesis of republican government, was, in fact, far ahead of its time. “A thoroughgoing republican, Preston had a burning hatred for aristocracy and despotism of all kinds, secular or sacred...Preston’s ‘Protestant eye’ homed in on the rituals of deference to the Catholic hierarchy and sacred relics, both of which struck him as servile and un-American.” The obeisance Preston witnessed in Catholics throughout the city was similar to homage typically reserved for royalty. Preston wrote that “no one failed to pull off his hat as a Cardinal drove by, or to bow his head as he passed an image of the Virgin,” and that “devout fellow mortals prostrate themselves before a splinter of the true cross.” The American republican’s time spent in

³²⁹ Preston, *Reminiscences*, 57-58; O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 336-337.

lodgings near St. Peter's Cathedral illustrated his idea of the era's Catholic Church as a type of anaconda; "St. Peter's at first sight was short of my imagination; the emotion it excited was not as strong as I had expected. From day to day it grew more tremendous and oppressive." Preston wrote his friend Irving from Rome, "[M]y most frequent visits are to the Capitol, the Forum and the Coliseum. I believe the Americans from their republican sympathies are more interested in the history of Rome between the two Brutus's than any other people, and therefore we would visit the remains of that period with deeper feelings." For Preston, Catholicism equaled political oppression, and he saw it first as political despotism, and second as religious falsehood.³³⁰

Preston's two years in Europe influenced him profoundly for the rest of his life. His shocking firsthand observations of Europe's destitute poor furthered his belief that Southern slaves, protected by paternalistic care, were in a far more enviable state than Irish and Italian peasants. The Southerner's personal encounters with the police states of France and Italy impressed on his mind the value of republican government and states' rights. Later, as a politician, he passionately defended Southern institutions and freedoms.

His life as a politician and professor centered within the city of Columbia, South Carolina, where he relocated in 1820. After practicing law with SCC graduate and proslavery author William Harper, Preston served as a South Carolina Representative for Richland District from 1828 to 1832. He distinguished himself during the tariff nullification melee, emerging as one of the state's most prominent political figures. As a result, his state sent him to Washington as senator from 1834-1842, along with John C. Calhoun. Throughout his career, Preston defended the institution of slavery against its

³³⁰ Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 67-68; Preston, *Reminiscences*, 78-81; Preston to Washington Irving, March 16, 1818, Preston Family Papers, VHS.

abolitionist detractors and upheld the idea that the “republic” of South Carolina and the entire South had the right to employ the domestic arrangements it judged fit, emphasizing his conviction that Europe and the North had no right to impose their opinions upon other regions.³³¹

II. Preston’s Militant Fight against Abolitionism

Throughout his career, he denounced abolitionism as not only fanatical but also diabolically dangerous. Preston noted that abolitionism had traveled across the Atlantic Ocean from Britain to the northeast. What he personally found most absurd about abolitionist agitators of England and Ireland was the irony of their fervor to free slaves when their own working class was starving in squalor. Noting the turmoil in former European colonies in the Caribbean as a result of slave revolts or sudden emancipation, Preston determined to avoid such results in the South at the hands of the Northern-led federal government. He determined to diminish the presence of abolitionism within Congress.

In 1836, Preston relayed his deep concern over the abolition petitions flowing into the Senate in a letter to his kinsman and soon-to-be Virginia governor, David Campbell. “Yesterday a large batch was presented to the Senate and very many more are behind. Things have come to that pass that the South not only has a right but is compelled to demand from Congress, some measure which will quiet the agitation of this question.” He would in two months demand the implementation of the gag rule for the preservation of the South and the Union in one of his best-known speeches. “This government ought not to permit itself to be made an agent for disturbing and alarming the people of the South,” Preston fumed. “In truth our danger consists in agitation and as long as Congress

³³¹ Preston to George Ticknor, May 8, 1824, Preston Papers, SCL.

permits its doors to be open to these people by suffering it to remain in doubt whether it can or will interfere we can have no peace. I shall propose a resolution declaratory of the incompetency of Congress to interfere in the matter,” he promised his kinsman. “Our great difficulty is that both political parties in the North are unwilling to offend the abolitionists.” He later utilized the major points from this personal letter in the foundation of his speech to the Senate.³³²

In public declarations and private correspondence, Preston demonstrated much the same opinion of abolition as Thornwell; abolitionists’ claims against slaveholders were completely unjust and inaccurate. “Those [Britain and the North] who assail us, know nothing of the institution which they denounce – nothing of its complex and various character,” he asserted in a letter to George Ticknor in 1824. “They have not seen it in its actual existence, are ignorant of the facts about which they pretend to reason, and cannot comprehend the consequences of their [abolitionist] proceedings.” The senator felt that abolitionists gathered together the worst examples of slavery and failed to reflect the multitude of slaveholders of what he considered good character.³³³

In 1835, Preston confided his fears to Legaré, his old companion in Europe: “We have been grievously annoyed by the abolition fury of the North which is becoming really dangerous.” The senator’s anger was piqued by what he labeled the illogical fanaticism and fury of abolitionists. “The east, north, and northwest is in a foam about it...speaking, preaching, and printing about it, inflaming and infuriating the public mind to an attack upon us – and the fiery Southern blood every now and then rises to boiling heat.” In closing, he declared nervously, “What will come of it God only knows.” Preston

³³² Preston to David Campbell, Jan. 9, 1836, Rubenstein Library, Duke University.

³³³ Preston, *Speech of Mr. Preston, of South Carolina, in the Senate of the United States, March 1, 1836, on the abolition question*, (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1836), 8.

believed that in fighting abolitionism, he fought not only for Southern safety, but also for American national unity.³³⁴

A. European Example

Two of Preston's major Senate speeches, *On the Abolition Question* (1836) and *On the Annexation of Texas* (1838) explain his deep disgust for abolition and his firm belief that European influences were responsible for the "frenzy." During the gag rule agitations, Preston warmly approved James Buchanan's "idea...to receive, then instantly reject, antislavery petitions," which Congress approved in March, 1836. As historian William W. Freehling states, "Carolina's...senator, William C. Preston, hailed Buchanan's reception and instant rejection formula as 'the next strongest condemnation of abolitionists'" among the available options. Preston's speech, "On the Abolition Question," delivered and published that same year, proved extremely effective, as Congress ruled in his favor.³³⁵

In his speech concerning the annexation of Texas, Preston insisted on a balance favorable to the southern states, as opposed to the exclusion of Texas from the Union to placate Northern abolitionists. The debate over spreading slavery into new Western territories would become quite important, even essential, to his SCC students in their later political careers. The North, he believed, displayed an unreasonable concern about possible Mexican retaliation when considering whether or not the United States would annex former Mexican territory. "The independence and free agency of Texas," Preston declaimed, stood impugned by the constant concerns over Mexico. He avowed that it was more likely that Texas could conquer Mexico, than that the reverse would occur.

³³⁴ Preston to Hugh Swinton Legaré, Mar. 27, 1835, Preston Papers, SCL.

³³⁵ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, 325-327.

Recently, “for the first time,” as Preston phrased it, “there is a loud and wide-spread clamor against the annexation of Texas...met by a tempest of oppression.” Preston announced, “It cannot fail to make a deep and mournful impression upon the South that the opposition to the proposed measure is cotemporaneous with the recent excitement on the subject of abolition.”³³⁶

John Quincy Adams was “riding upon and directing the storm of opposition” against Texas – suspicious, Preston thought, because Adams was a Massachusetts antislavery man. “All men, of all parties, from all sections, [especially] Mr. Adams...desired the acquisition of Texas until the clamorous interference in the affairs of the South was caught up in New England, *from Old England* [italics mine.]” The abolitionist opinions of the British, which Preston would have witnessed personally during his European tour, were now influencing the North, to what he predicted to be the inevitable destruction of the South, the North, and the nation at large.³³⁷

Preston directly linked the Northern abolition movement to European influence on the North. Petitions pouring into the Senate for abolition, he explained, “do not come as heretofore, singly, and far apart: from the Society of Friends, or the obscure vanity of some philanthropic club, but...from soured and agitated communities; poured down upon us from the overflowing of public sentiment, which, everywhere, and in all Western Europe and [north]eastern America, has been lashed into excitement on this subject.”

This deluge of disdain flowed across the Atlantic from Western Europe. From personal

³³⁶ Preston, *Speech of Mr. Preston, of South Carolina, on the annexation of Texas: delivered in the Senate of the United States, April 24, 1838* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1838), 3-8. In order to secure Florida from the Spanish in the Adams-Oñís Treaty of 1819, John Quincy Adams reluctantly agreed to allow Texas to be a part of Mexico’s land. At the time, Adams, along with Jefferson, Monroe, Jackson, and lesser politicians, avowed that the land had belonged to the United States and tried desperately to regain it – until the sectional slavery tensions occurred.

³³⁷ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 8, 14.

knowledge, Preston explained, “In Germany, in France, and in England, there is a great movement party organized upon the spirit of the times, whose tendency is to overturn established institutions, and remodel the organic forms of society; for whose purposes the process of experiment is too slow, and the action of reason too cold; whose infuriated philanthropy goeth [sic] about seeking whom it may devour.” Preston employed a Biblical allusion to Satan to express his feelings. Making a similar connection between Jacobinism and abolitionism as did his fellow SCC graduate Thornwell, Preston declared, “The general pulse beats stronger and quicker than at any period since the *access* of the French revolution.”³³⁸

Affirming the illogical nature of abolition thought and French politics, Preston continued, “To these ethical or political enthusiasts, the remote...institution of slavery offers at once a cheap and fruitful subject. Accordingly, it is known that the *doctrinaire* and *juste milieu* party of France, and its leading paper...is devoted to the purposes of abolitionism.” Preston feared European trends; “The...Prime Minister of France, with St. Domingo before his eyes, is president of an abolition society, having in view the manumission of the slaves in the French West Indies.” This area was far too close to the South for the senator’s comfort. Southerners well remembered the Haitian Revolution, which struck the fear of slave revolt into their hearts.³³⁹

His most feared European nation, however, was England because of its influence on the North which, in turn, threatened his native section. “But the state of feeling in England has a much more direct influence upon us, and is therefore of more important investigation. She exercises a vast power over the public mind of this country, and

³³⁸ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 5.

³³⁹ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 5.

especially of the northeastern portion of it.” Preston, ever alert to the growth of Northern power and the Western expansion question, feared the Northeastern powers in government. Jealousy flared in his language; “An intense and immediate sympathy binds them together. The same literature, laws, and language – to a certain extent, the same political institutions – and so bound up together, or rather interwoven, by a vast and infinitely ramified intercourse, that the inhabitants of the Northern and Middle States are more familiar with the daily press of England than with that of their own country south of the Potomac.” Abolitionist historian Sam Haynes briefly remarks upon Preston’s concern: “South Carolina congressman William Preston was one of many Southerners troubled by the Anglophilia of the North, and attributed the recent turmoil in part to the fact that its inhabitants had more in common with the British than their Southern brethren. Great Britain, he believed, exercised ‘a vast power’ over American public opinion, especially in the Northeast.”³⁴⁰

In Preston’s analysis of English events and his fears for the South, he compared Parliament to Congress, English abolitionists to Northern abolitionists, and West Indian planters and slaves to Southern planters and slaves. “The English Parliament, not only with the approbation, but at the insistence of the English people, has liberated the slaves of the West Indies.” He spoke symbolically for Southern rights: “The rights of individuals [in the West Indies], the public [monetary] interest, the existence of the colonies, could not arrest the torrent of public opinion: all are swept away.” Ironically, “A Government laboring under a load of public debt, and a People oppressed by enormous taxation, have given one hundred millions of dollars for the abolition of slavery...and trampled upon the rights of private property.” Historian David Brion Davis

³⁴⁰ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 5-6; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 196-197.

confirms Preston's statement that Britain lost money by abolishing slavery; he extols its extreme unselfishness, calling Britain's move of emancipation a national economic sacrifice for the sake of a higher moral good. Preston, contrarily, believed that the government had robbed British subjects who owned property in the West Indies and British taxpayers who would have to make up the national financial losses. The fact that the senator's personal encounters with the heavily taxed British poor firsthand no doubt influenced him in their favor.³⁴¹

Preston cautioned Congress not to repeat Britain's mistakes concerning abolition. "This is a lesson of terrible admonition to us; and let not the history of the progress of events in England be thrown away." He described a slippery slope of occurrences; "It is but forty or fifty years since, that the abolition of slavery was considered in England, by a weak enthusiast in Parliament [William Wilberforce], and a cloistered scholar of Oxford [Thomas Clarkson], whose *heated imagination* was directed to this subject." To begin with, Wilberforce and Clarkson were, according to the senator, "neglected [and] despised," Parliament sided with the planters, and the planters "lulled themselves into a fatal security." Wilberforce and Clarkson appealed to party neutrals, who aided their cause, but the press was the key to their success; the newspapers constantly printed their declamations of slavery and captured the public interest. Despite repeated assurances to the British planter class that slavery would not be interfered with, the government nevertheless passed the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. "And now, look to Jamaica for the result," Preston declared ominously.³⁴²

³⁴¹ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 6; David Brion Davis, "Slavery, Emancipation, and Progress," in *British Abolitionism and the Question of Moral Progress in History*, 13, 20, 22, 24.

³⁴² Preston, *Abolition Question*, 6.

European abolitionism stood directly behind the Northern states' fight to exclude Texas, Senator Preston explained. "I do not now speak of that wild and blind fanaticism, or still blinder cant, which infects the public mind on this subject; and which even in this country has (I say it with shame and sorrow) received an impulse from that impersonation of that blackguardism of Europe, Mr. O'Connell." The senator was a first-person witness of the misery and starvation of the Irish laboring class during his European tour. He deemed it absurd that abolitionist Daniel O'Connell would spend his time worrying about slaves, who, to Preston's mind, enjoyed paternalistic care, when O'Connell's own people were suffering terribly. Neither Europe nor the North, Preston believed, truly understood the institution of slavery.³⁴³

In Preston's mind, abolitionist thought had defeated Britain in the war over slavery; "Look...to the sway and dominion which the principles and feelings of Wilberforce and Clarkson have obtained over the whole public mind." This abolitionist feat had been accomplished primarily through an emotional writing style that would "arouse attention" and "inflame the imagination", found in "the daily press, the periodicals, works of political economy and of fiction." Preston lamented that "the whole mass of literature, is filled and reeking with abolitionism." The orator exclaimed, "Cant has been stimulated into passion, and passion inflamed into fury. A morbid sensibility has been roused for the African, and has outrun the general excitement." This passionate language, designed to encourage sensibility, increased numbers of abolitionist devotees, and pervaded all of society: "Abolitionist societies are multiplied, and nobles and commoners press into them with equal zeal."³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 14.

³⁴⁴ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 6.

Preston found it patently illogical that the miserable British poor took part in the movement: “Meetings are held, in which are found together the proudest titles and *starving operatives*.” The senator tacitly indicated that these impoverished factory workers should instead concern themselves with their own pitiable condition. Moreover, the abolitionist movement detracted from the plight of the Irish. Preston overwhelmingly identified with the suffering Irish during his time there. Activists ignored them, however, and their “morbid sensibility” had made a “sort of crevasse” that “has broken from the general excitement, and poured itself upon Africa,” Preston lamented. “With a strong perception of this feeling, O’Connell [well-known Irish abolitionist] exclaimed in the British Parliament, while claiming its attention to the infinitely worse condition of the Irish Catholics, ‘Were to God we were black.’” Even the noted abolitionist, Preston declared, realized that his Irish people would receive more public sympathy and assistance if they were slaves of African descent. In Preston’s sojourn abroad, the Irish endured the pangs of starvation, whereas Jack, a Charlestonian slave in Paris, had received food and protection from Southern gentlemen.³⁴⁵

Preston continued firm in his profound belief that abolitionism was driven by emotion and sentiment rather than reason and logic. He deemed laughable the claim that abolitionist thought was “the march of mind, the progress of reason, before which the institutions of the South must inevitably give way.” It would be almost unheard of for “the progress of reason to be attended by such contortions” as accompanied abolitionism. “It rarely happens, sir, that a fixed public opinion, properly so called, manifests itself by such violence and fury as characterize the proceedings of abolitionism,” he reasoned. “But what voice can penetrate the deafness of fanaticism? It neither hears, nor sees, nor

³⁴⁵ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 7-8.

reasons; but feels, and burns, and acts with a maniac force.” Despite his assessment of abolitionists’ logic and reason, Preston affirmed that the power of “their zeal and enterprise” was not to be underestimated due to the change similar emotion and activity had caused in Europe. “We have seen what those qualities effected [sic] in England on this subject, and they are not less efficacious here,” he declared.³⁴⁶

B. Preston’s Fear of the North

This abolitionist “fury” was labeled by Preston a “work of devastation and massacre” that Clark and Wilberforce began in Britain and that now infiltrated the Northern United States. Citing a specific example, Preston stated that “the progress of the agitation in Vermont is greatly accelerated; that seven societies have been recently organized in one county...societies springing up in quarters, remote neighborhoods” where one “had supposed that abolition had scarcely been heard of.” One Vermont senator “has informed us that amongst these petitioners are men of as much worth and patriotism as are to be found any where” and that Congress “is constitutionally endowed with the power of manumitting the slaves in this District [Washington, D.C.], and that it is expedient to exercise this power.” He then considered America’s commercial stronghold: “There is at this moment in New York an association of men of high standing, who, with a spirit worthy of a better cause, have bound themselves to contribute \$40,000 a year to the propagation of abolition doctrines throughout the press. Five of these pay \$20,000 a year, and one \$1,000 a month. Such is the spirit, and such the means to sustain it.” His fear of Northern capitalism, which he worried might demolish Southern agrarianism, was also evident from this statement.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 8-10.

³⁴⁷ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 9-10.

Preston continued to analyze the Northeastern spirit. “Five hundred societies are now organized, and in active operation, and daily increasing in numbers. The press is subsidized; societies for mutual inflammation are formed; men, women, and children join in the petitions; rostrums are created; itinerant lecturers pervade the land, preaching up to nightly crowds a crusade against slavery.” The huge nature of the movement itself, Preston believed, bespoke danger on a few different levels. “In these wide-spread associations, are there none but the weak and base; a noisy and impotent rabble, which will fret itself into exhaustion? Or are they composed...of a mixed multitude of all those whom wild enthusiasm, mistaken piety, perverted benevolence, and blind zeal, hurry and crowd together to swell the torrent of public enthusiasm, when it sets strongly towards a favorable object?” Preston leaned toward the second example, comparing abolitionist zeal to feeble-mindedness and insanity.³⁴⁸

Preston further blamed the abolitionists for the national divide between the two regions, North and South, which opposed each other. “Be not deceived...in regard to the power of the causes, which are operating upon the population of the non-slaveholding States. The public mind in these States...has been lying fallow for the seed [abolitionism] which is now sown broadcast.” The majority of Northern states had already ended slavery by means of gradual abolition laws passed in the early nineteenth century, and now British abolitionists urged the North to demolish the peculiar institution in the South.³⁴⁹

Because the North could exist without slavery, Preston declared his conviction that Northerners did not understand the South’s desperate need of the institution. “The spirit of propagand[a] is in proportion to the distance of the object, and the ignorance of

³⁴⁸ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 10.

³⁴⁹ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 11.

the propagandist. Of the whole population of these [Northern] States, ninety-nine hundredths regard the institution with decided disapprobation;” practically all entertained a “vague desire that it should be abolished, in some way, at some time.” In opposition to Southern proslavery thinkers who believed in “slavery in the abstract,” Preston explained, “[Northerners] believe that slavery is bad in the abstract, and not incurable as it exists.” Northerners’ physical distance from slavery, the senator explained, “makes them at once more ignorant of its actual condition, and bolder in suggesting remedies. It is to such a temper of mind that the inflammatory [abolition] appeals I have spoken of are addressed.” Vermont, Massachusetts, and Ohio had failed to “embrace...the various interests of the Union in a just and equal consideration,” strongly urging against Preston’s proposal for Texas statehood. The North was behaving as “a combination, conceived in hostility towards one section, and for the purpose of aggrandizing the power of another,” particularly the South. This fear of Northern power stayed with Preston and was communicated to his students at SCC. This distrust of the North would contribute to their rationale for Southern secession.³⁵⁰

In the Senate, Preston’s dread of superior Northern power came to the fore. He judged the North’s collective statement, stripped of all varnish, to be: “We are hostile to the institutions of the South, and propose their destruction; we have a predominating power, daily increasing, over that section; and we do not intend that it shall put itself in a condition to resist our power, when we may choose to exercise it.” By “institutions,” he meant slavery; by “predominating power,” he indicated the manufacturing revenue which earned self-sufficiency and tremendous income for the North and its population that well surpassed the South; by “exercise,” he feared the stop of slavery by legal means or by

³⁵⁰ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 11; Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 14.

war, which he already feared. The manufacturing North, built in the image of Britain, where the poor languished and tyrants ruled, he insisted, would reduce the South to a similar place of misery if not kept in check.³⁵¹

Preston further denounced Northern abolition power in an 1841 letter to his erstwhile companion in France, Hugh Swinton Legaré. Edward Everett, a Massachusetts abolitionist, was being considered for the crucial post of ambassador to Great Britain. Disturbed, Preston explained Everett's doctrine: the federal government should immediately "abolish slavery" in the South, end the interstate slave trade, and deny any slaveholding area admission to the Union. "Now this is the extreme point to which abolition has been carried by any one and was pronounced satisfactory by the anti-slavery society to which the avowal was made," Preston reported to Legaré. "Nor is it fit or safe that we should be represented at St James by a gentleman who has avowed these opinions." Showing a cosmopolitan traveler's view of the situation, he added, "All the abolition opinions[,] feelings and purposes are forged in London and a minister entertaining these opinions is a fit member of the world convention." Sending him to a less crucial post like Austria or Russia would be safe enough, "but England is a different affair," Preston avowed. "We are in a state of fearful anxiety here." As professor at SCC, he would later train a future Confederate ambassador to France, Edwin DeLeon, in his own theories (see chapter six.)³⁵²

Rejecting the notion of Southerners as agitators, Preston pointed a finger at those he judged the actual agitators – those Northerners who would tear their country asunder. "As yet, Mr. President, the incendiaries are at your door declaring admittance, and it is

³⁵¹ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 14.

³⁵² Preston to Hugh Swinton Legaré, Senate Chamber, Aug. 27, 1841, Preston Papers, SCL.

yet within your power to say to them that they shall not throw their burning brands upon this floor, or propagate the conflagration through this Government.” The Gag Rule Preston supported would keep these “burning brands” from reducing the Union to cinders.³⁵³

C. Threat to the South

Throughout his career, Preston defended Southern honor against its detractors, encouraging both young and old within the region to protect it with their blood and their lives. Preston avowed South Carolina’s position as leader of the southern states. “In truth if we make a movement all the Southern states would from necessity if they did not from feeling take their stations at our side,” he wrote to Waddy Thompson in 1830. Vice versa, he also believed that South Carolina should fight to the death, even if it faced the Northern contingent alone: “[W]hether they [the other Southern states] will or not I should not pause for a moment for them. So Carolina is strong enough by herself to do right or finish in trying – this is my credo.” Defending Southern rights endowed by the nation’s founders, he declared that the “constitutional assembly,” including its Northern component, must abide by the rules. What difference did it make, Preston asked, “sitting here under the constitution, whether it [abolition] be the march of mind or of madness that is treading under foot that instrument to get at its institutions? Whether it be opinion or phrensy [sic] – whether it be destiny or fashion, you have no right to decide upon it, or to consider of it.” While he was in Europe, Preston had learned to identify with his state as his country, and he did not want his “republic” of South Carolina to be oppressed by despotic rule in the manner of France or Italy. Preston held that the Constitution permitted slavery, and that the legislators had no right to violate that sacred sanction:

³⁵³ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 4.

“We are...a constitutional assembly, whose business it is to...defend the rights it guaranties; and it is equally our duty to do so, whether public opinion or madness rules the hour.” Preston felt a responsibility to make the other legislators see reason. “My object is to rouse the Senate, and, as far as I can be heard, these States, to a just sense of the impending dangers.”³⁵⁴

Growing still more confident in defense of his homeland, Preston addressed the Senate forcefully, declaring that on the “institution of slavery...you have no jurisdiction over it in any of its aspects.” Moreover, “emphatically, you have no right to assail...the domestic relations of a particular section of the country...of which the constitution puts beyond your reach, and which a fair courtesy...should exempt from your discussion.” Speaking both for himself and his constituents, he continued, “It exacts some patience in a Southern man to sit here and listen, day after day, to enumerations of the demoralizing effects of his household arrangements *considered in the abstract* – to hear his conditions of life lamented over, and to see the coolness with which it is proposed to admit petitioners who assail, and vilify, and pity him, on the ground that it would hurt their feelings, if we do not listen to them.” The South, Preston indicated, had traveled beyond mere hurt feelings to fear and rage and was headed toward a greater conflict.³⁵⁵

In his abolition speech to Congress, Preston spoke of Southerners’ double fear of massacre: the fear of civil war with the North, and the perennial Southern fear of slave revolt. The South Carolina senator reminded Congress of the “honorable gentlemen from the South, who have all at stake; around whose hearths, and in whose bed-chambers, the cry of thousands is invoking murder, in the name of God and liberty.” Preston felt that

³⁵⁴ Preston to Waddy Thompson, Feb. 14, 1830, Preston Papers, SCL; Preston, *Abolition Question*, 8.

³⁵⁵ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 3-4.

abolitionist philosophy could potentially encourage slaves to kill their masters. He mentioned the specter of the British colonies built on slavery that had endured bloody slave revolts; “with the example of Jamaica and St. Domingo before them, even [Southern gentlemen] are not sufficiently aroused to the emergency,” Preston lamented. He repeatedly warned the South to follow the example of Great Britain.³⁵⁶

During his speech for Texas annexation in 1838, Preston questioned the federal government’s right to give American territory to another nation and expressed concern that, if John Quincy Adams had legally given away the Texas territory to shrink slave territory, Northern government officials could sell off parcels of the South that displeased them. “Will any one...claim for Congress the power to dispose of either of these Territories to a foreign Power?” he queried. “If it be said that, having purchased them, we may sell them, the proposition is equally true of the States of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri. Can we sell them, or exchange them for Canada?” Using language that evoked apprehension of Southern enslavement to the North, he said, “[W]ould any man south of the Potomac feel himself safe from sale or exchange, while the wild fanaticism of the abolitionists is hurrying so large a portion of our fellow-citizens upon measures less extravagant?” Rather than the positive force the North and Europe envisioned, Preston saw the “wild fanaticism” of abolitionism as an explosive negative force which would tear the American nation apart if left unchecked. Abolitionism, imported from Europe, caused Northerners to consider selling their neglected Southern brothers like slaves to foreign powers, Preston believed.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 13-14.

³⁵⁷ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 8.

Preston also feared the prospect of a war where brother would fight brother, brought on by the catalyst of abolitionism that had sailed across the ocean from Europe to the North and now threatened the South. “Will that spirit which demands the exercise of political power for the confiscation of property, and sports itself upon the very brink of servile war – will that spirit pause in its reckless career, at so obvious a measure as the retrocession of Southern territory?” As did others during the pre-Civil War decades, Preston feared that Southern territorial opportunities would shrink on the American frontier. The region’s political power, already in a precarious balance with the North, would further diminish in Washington. The South would also miss opportunities to connect with the West and to mold it in its own image. Preston fought his abolitionist menace for the annexation of Texas so that his section could acquire more slavery-friendly territory and greater congressional power.³⁵⁸

Without slavery, Preston was convinced that the South could not exist: “[W]hen the South finds in these...dignified legislative proceedings...a question of political power raised against her...founded upon her social institutions, she ought, she must, make up her mind...to demand a guarantee for them.” Giving up slavery was, to him, no option: “The question of her existence is forced upon her; and if you will not consent to adopt some measure to protect her, it will be her duty by her own action to provide for her own safety.” He would not stand idly by while South Carolina became a tributary of the Northern-led federal government, like Ireland was to Great Britain.³⁵⁹

Preston assured the senators that the South stood strong: “Our own safety is in our own keeping...I know that the South has the power and the will to vindicate its rights and

³⁵⁸ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 8.

³⁵⁹ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 14.

protect itself.” Invoking the proud Southern mantra of honor, he continued, “Even if it [the South] were destitute of the high spirit which characterizes it, if it were without the resources which abound there, it would be forced into a position of self-defense by the inexorable necessities of self-preservation.” In addition to a show of strength, this was also a threat: “The South ha[s] drawn deep lessons of instruction from the colonial history of France and England. St. Domingo and Jamaica were colonies subject to the dominion of a foreign Power, and perished because they were colonies. Their disastrous history was not recorded in vain.” The abolitionist fomentation Preston had witnessed in the parent nations of these colonies had stripped colonial plantation owners of their wealth and security, even causing revolt. The South, Preston hinted, would not become a “colony” of the Northern Federal Government.³⁶⁰

“We of the South, Mr. President,” Preston declaimed with his famous oratorical powers, “bear with such composure as we may the pious horror and self-righteous indignation with which many of our brethren speculate upon us.” Like Thornwell, Preston deemed this criticism sheer hypocrisy. “[I]t is a different affair, when ignorant and impertinent denunciators rise up and demand the control of the policy of this Government.” He largely blamed the abolitionist petitioners; “You are called upon to declare that the Southern portion of your confederacy, by reason of certain domestic institutions, in the judgment of your petitioners wicked and detestable, is to be excluded from some part of the political benefits of this Government.” Slavery, to Preston, was a useful institution, far superior to the systems he saw in Ireland and Italy where the

³⁶⁰ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 15.

working classes starved and suffered. He predicted that the inferior system was en route to the North through European influence.³⁶¹

The South, Preston posited, had already sacrificed much of its power since the nation was founded. At length, Preston argued that the three-fifths compromise had not been intended to “make an approximation of equality” for the South, as the Massachusetts delegation had recently claimed in order to argue for greater present-day Northern power. At the time the Constitution was written, he explained that of the document’s authors “and of those who sat in the first Congress, two-thirds were slaveholders.” Slaveholding states had numbered 18 while non-slaveholding states had numbered 12. His native Virginia’s generosity resulted in loss of territory and power; “Virginia gave to the non-slaveholding States the populous Northwest, for their growth and expansion,” Preston claimed. Combined with the Missouri Compromise, which, in Preston’s mind, denied slavery in what had originally been the South’s own land, gaining the large Texas territory would in no way equalize the two sections. Preston admitted that the South would never again have as much power as the North: “All that we want is some reasonable check upon an acknowledged power.” Preston assured the gathering, “Ours is the let-us-alone policy. All we wish is not to suffer aggression.”³⁶²

Preston predicted that the North’s denial of government privileges to the South would result in disunion. “It is an arrogant pretension to superiority on one side, and denunciation of inferiority on the other.” Not only was Southern existence at stake, but also its pride and honor. If this inferiority was “sanctioned by Congress...[it] makes us at once two people, two races – a superior and an inferior.” Instead of their place as white

³⁶¹ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 14-15.

³⁶² Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 16.

slaveholders, the Southern elite would become an inferior race – perhaps a black race – of slaves, bound in servitude to the North, or perhaps a fate still worse – free working-class paupers tending Northern factories. “We neither can nor ought...to continue in political union on such terms,” he insisted. No doubt Preston believed himself a latter-day Patrick Henry (one of his ancestors,) declaring that liberty was worth any cost, even death, even civil war. His SCC students would adopt this sentiment of state patriotism and defend it on the battlefield.³⁶³

In an 1856 letter to his colleague Lieber, Preston denounced the interference of Northern abolitionists in what he deemed the proper business of the South. “But one thing is certain that if it be an evil it is our appropriate and peculiar evil and not a thing to be dealt with by volunteers and intruders,” Preston insisted. “If it be a cancer on my face it is my cancer and no Yankee has the right to scratch it or to force a patent remedy upon me.” Slavery was too important and far-reaching a topic, reaching “above politics into morals and sociology,” so individuals should be quite careful before expressing conclusions.³⁶⁴

D. Abolition as Harbinger of Civil War

While he assured Congress in the 1830s that the South stood ready to prevent its enslavement (a term they well understood) to the North, Preston also accurately prophesied that abolition would create a “conflagration” of civil war that would tear the nation apart if the Gag Rule was not implemented. Preston predicted that the abolition question would soon make a mockery of the classical republican two-party system, which he believed protected national security. “[D]eriving strength from position, it acquires a

³⁶³ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 15.

³⁶⁴ Preston to Lieber, July 14, 1856, Lieber Papers, HEH.

new principle of augmentation, until it becomes sufficiently powerful to absorb one or the other of the contending parties, and become itself the principle of the controversy. Then are added party spirit, political ambition, local interests; and, with all this aggregation of strength and power, think you, sir, that abolitionism, at your next session, will pause at your door, waiting to see if it be your pleasure to ask it in?" He beseeched them, "I invoke gentlemen from all quarters, of all parties, to unite at once, to combine here, in the adoption of the strongest measures of which this Government is capable, and thus to enter into mutual pledges to oppose, by all possible means, and to the last extremity, the destructive and exterminating doctrines of these terrible incendiaries." Boldly, Preston demanded, "Say to the abolitionists that this Government will, in no event, be made an instrument in your hands." Abolitionism, to Preston, was a force like Catholicism; in the senator's opinion, both were fanatical. The Catholic ecclesiastical-political force had subdued the Italian people, as Preston had seen during his European sojourn, and he did not wish the abolitionist moral-political force to likewise subdue South Carolina.³⁶⁵

Preston could not look upon the abolitionists "without the deepest apprehensions" and urged "both sides of the House" to sit up and take notice. He warned, "We repose in a false and fatal security." Even his allies, he believed, were indulging in false hopes concerning abolitionism's dangers and the country's future. He wished he could share their pleasant hopes, but he simply could not do so. "I...call upon them to awake to a sense of the danger, and be prepared to meet it with a thorough comprehension of its import; and, as a member of the Senate of the United States, I warn and exhort gentlemen to take early and decided counsel as to what is fit to be done," Preston exclaimed.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 11-12, 14.

³⁶⁶ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 12-13.

He charged the Senate with creating a barrier of peace: “Save the Union if you can.” He warned, “Will [the Government] be strong enough to prevent [disunion] if proceedings go on, which inevitably make two people of us, warring on a question which, on the [South’s] side, involves existence, and, on the [North’s side], arrays all the fury of fanaticism [abolition]?” He queried, “Think you, sir, that, if you have not the spirit of power to trample out the brand that is thrown amongst us, you can yet bring help when the whole land is wrapped in conflagration?” Preston pictured the literal fire of the Civil War, in which the Carolina boys he had trained would be consumed for the South. He continued, “I see...the gathering of a tempest, surcharged with all the elements of devastation. [I]f they be wrong, and I right, and the blessed moments of preparation are thrown away until the storm bursts, they incur an awful responsibility.”³⁶⁷

Raging on, he warned against the “madness” of abolitionism that stood ready to devour the United States. “It is against that spirit of aggrandizement and recklessness, which is, in the prosecution of its mad career, blind to such obvious considerations as these.” Like Thornwell, he was “against that self-righteous arrogance which scorns and would chastise in others every thing different from itself. It is against that prurient and drunken philanthropy, more to be dreaded as a madness than to be pitied as a disease, which menaces the destruction of the Union, and a portion of it with massacre and burning, and all the nameless horrors of servile war.” Later, Preston influenced many young men to become active proponents of slavery and the South when he served as president and professor of SCC; most of them, zealous to protect Southern honor and

³⁶⁷ Preston, *Abolition Question*, 15.

rights, including slavery, served as leaders in the government that fought the North to its self-destruction.³⁶⁸

III. Preston's Commitment to the Southern Republic

Vehemence against abolition was intertwined with his zeal to protect the South. During his political career, Preston firmly espoused decisive action. In a letter to his old school friend Waddy Thompson during the 1832 nullification controversy, for example, he lamented President Jackson's avowal to "hang any man who attempts to enforce an act of nullification" and feared the temperamental Old Hickory might begin a "civil war if he can." The South "must be prepared to meet him."³⁶⁹

Preston's best expression of states' rights views, which he considered a surefire way of protecting his native region, occurred in his eloquent argument for Texas annexation in 1838. A report from the House of Representatives of Massachusetts cited concern that the United States Government did not have the right to conjoin to itself the "sovereign State of Texas," Preston explained. "The mistake lies in considering this, as to its nature and powers, a consolidated Government of one people, instead of a confederated Government of many States." This was self-evident, Preston explained, in Congress itself, where states elected their personal senators and representatives. "The committee says that 'the measure is in fact the union of *two* independent Governments. Certainly, the *union* of twenty-seven 'independent Governments.'" Preston may well have feared that the Northern contingent would try to force abolitionism on the South through the argument of a supreme federal government. The South, he believed, was an

³⁶⁸ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 17.

³⁶⁹ Preston to Waddy Thompson, Nov. 8, 1832, Preston Papers, SCL.

independent republic which freely chose to be a part of the nation, not a subordinate colony like Ireland to Great Britain.³⁷⁰

The senator also felt that the South, not the North, had the purest concept of republican government. “Is it more consistent with our republican notions that men and territory can be transferred by the arbitrary will of a monarch, for a price, than that a free people may be associated with us by mutual consent?” He reminisced about the Louisiana Territory, which he believed had included Texas. “If France can sell to us her subjects and her territory, why cannot the people of Texas give themselves and their territory to us?” He indicted the Massachusetts committee again: “Can we buy, or according to the report of the Massachusetts committee, conquer, and yet not enter into an amicable agreement with the same object, in pursuance of the ascertained will of all parties concerned?” Preston concluded that the Northern-led federal government preferred force, in the same manner as the European governments he had witnessed. The senator preferred liberty and free agency within republican government.³⁷¹

A. European Influence

In 1823, Preston wrote a letter on the tariff, later reprinted in a Boston paper and published in pamphlet form, arguing against the tariff based on negative European examples. Sensing danger ahead from Northern politicians, Preston purposed to “rouse the South and West to the discussion of the tariff.” Addressing the Louisiana governor, James Brown, in particular and all other readers at large, Preston reminded him that the Mississippi River and New Orleans stood as natural outlets for quantities of cotton, sugar, and fur. He argued that “where Agriculture and Commerce meet, join hands, and

³⁷⁰ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 11-12.

³⁷¹ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 12.

acknowledge their relationship as parent and child,” unlike the reverse relationship existing in Britain, “it is impossible that you can lend your aid to a system which will put all this heritage of wealth under contribution to a narrow, selfish, and sordid monopoly.” Louisiana was “as fertile as Egypt, and an hundred times as large,” he praised, invoking his Jeffersonian republican respect for agriculture. Domestic manufactures “enter into the economy of the farmer’s household, stand in no need of encouragement...exist in all farming countries, and will continue, until the household labor of the farmer’s family and female servants can be otherwise employed more profitably, and until the time not occupied on the regular work of the farm can be better appropriated.” He insisted, “This can never happen, unless superinduced by a manufacturing system.” In imitation of Britain, the North intended just that.³⁷²

Preston cited British manufacturing errors. “In illustration of this fact, in England, within a few years, a private family was not permitted to grind its own coffee,” he explained. As negative as manufacturing had proven itself in Great Britain, it would prove still worse if applied to the United States, Preston avowed. “With a thin population, a country abounding in extensive forests, a fertile soil, high wages, and an easy commerce, how can the inhabitants of this country be converted into Manufacturers? What political legerdemain can assimilate them to the population of Birmingham or Manchester?” Preston emphasized that this application would be extremely disastrous, even if possible. “What power of legislation can call the ploughman from his fields, the rifleman from the woods, or the boatman from the river, to crowd them into narrow apartments, where they will waste their free spirits in unwholesome confinement, and

³⁷² Preston, *A Letter to the Honorable James Brown, Senator in Congress from the state of Louisiana, On the Tariff, By an Inhabitant of the South* (Washington, 1823), 5-7.

spend the strength of their sinewy arms on shuttles and spindles?” He had personally seen how negatively this arrangement had affected the working classes of the British Isles. In contrast, he believed that the working class was far better off working in the open air and enjoying nature’s bounty of food, as he saw the Southern norm.³⁷³

B. The North and the Federal Government

Having explained the tariff’s dangers in light of what he had observed in Britain, Preston then warned his readers of Northern politicians’ maneuvers to enact a dangerous tariff to support an even more threatening manufacturing stronghold. Preston exposed the deviousness of a Northern politician who tacitly offered Louisiana a sugar monopoly in order to “sustain his grand manufacturing monopoly.” The South Carolinian gravely feared “a system of monopoly” in which the federal government, controlled by the North, would “trample down...the general interests of the country, and control...from Maine to Louisiana, the mutinous spirit of an injured, insulted, and swindled people.” Preston reasoned with the governor; “I hope and believe, that neither you [n]or your constituents can be induced to sacrifice the great, permanent, and general means of wealth, for the sake of a trifling advance on the price of sugar.” Knowing that Northern control would sooner or later involve the loss of slavery, he later speculated on Louisiana’s fidelity to her native region: “Will Louisiana give up her sugar [market] or her negroes?”³⁷⁴

The pamphlet invoked total Southern interest, as these states sustained themselves through agriculture. After the initial moves of certain Northern politicians, Preston declared that “undisguised war” on the cotton and tobacco states would follow the blow, including “Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina, Georgia, Alabama,

³⁷³ Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 7-8.

³⁷⁴ Preston to Francis Preston (father), Dec. 16, 1822, Preston Family Papers, VHS; Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 3-5.

Mississippi, and half of Tennessee.” These were “to be passed under the yoke; to become the vassals of the cotton spinners; the slaves of the woolen weavers.” He had seen what was, in his experience, worse than slavery in the vassalage of the poor of England and Ireland to the factory owners, and believed manufacturing would bring that to the South. “Every owner of a manufacturing establishment will have...many cities for his tributaries...and from his clattering castle of looms and spinning-jennies, will levy his exactions upon as wide a territory, create as much dismay, and perpetuate as much tyranny” as existed in medieval times in Europe, he warned his readers. As a safe alternative to Southern manufacturing, Preston discussed the superiority of equal trade with Britain for needed goods and urged against the proposed embargo on foreign trade. Smuggling would result through this proposed encouragement of Northern manufactures, and “[t]hose who, like you [and like Preston himself], have visited foreign countries, and passed through foreign custom houses” knew this was no desirable state of affairs, Preston solemnly warned the governor.³⁷⁵

Laying the blame on the North and its political interests for this manufacturing frenzy, he feared that a “secret plan” of “a sectional ambition of political ascendancy” was afoot. “We are willing to fight the battle openly and fairly,” he said of the South, but “we abominate...a low scuffle for territorial power; a canting clamor on slavery; a system of Hartford Conventions, Missouri Questions, and Tariffs.” Even if Northern power was not at stake, it was still a scheme “to establish a monopoly; and that its operation will be the impoverishment of the many for the benefit of the few – an intriguing, sordid, and selfish few,” just as he had observed in England and Ireland. “The tariff proposes to dissolve out commercial mutual dependence on foreign nations, and substitute, in its

³⁷⁵ Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 8-12.

stead, an absolute dependence upon a small Rhode Island or Pennsylvania corporation.” Mutually beneficial trade with Britain, on the other hand, did not make either nation inferior to or dependent upon the other, and left the South and the North with relative independence.³⁷⁶

C. The Strong South

The preservation of slavery was never far from Preston’s mind. He explained that the Northern-based tariff and manufacturing power would lead to the institution’s demise. A Northern politician, Preston warned, would “tell you...that you are dependent on your slaves, and should hasten to liberate yourself from the thralldom; that, without your knowledge, you have sacrificed your independence to an overseer and negroes, and that the only way to regain it, is to give your plantation to Mr. Tod [a Northern politician], and buy your sugar from him...” Preston warned Louisiana’s governor in 1823. He reminded the governor and other readers: “No one will dispute the fact, that the [Southern] population, to a man, is opposed to the tariff; we are to pay the expenses of this system. We, of the South, have no diversion of interest; its operation upon us is sectional, and to be ascertained by known, well-defined lines. This system, then, will create...strong sectional differences.” Preston, as representative of Richland District a few years later, would incite the Southern zeal of SCC students, who packed the State House to hear his speeches, and aid Cooper in rousing South Carolina to “calculate the value of the Union.”³⁷⁷

Preston warned the North and the federal government that dire consequences would ensue if they forced the tariff issue. “Your political arithmetic may enable you to

³⁷⁶ Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 14-15, 18.

³⁷⁷ Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 19-21.

estimate how much we can pay [in tariff fees], but not how much outrage we can bear,” he insisted, citing Southern honor. “The Southern temperament does not tamely submit to injustice or insult. You remember, sir, it was a Southern man who said, millions for defence [sic], and not a cent for tribute.” He placed the North and South, in this analogy, as two separate and hostile nations. Preston also feared that the tariff system would eventually ruin the whole nation’s economy, as was the case in Europe, both “the commercial interests of the Northern seacoast” and “the planting interests of the Southern interior.” The South might have abundant land for farming, but Preston had witnessed the famine of Italian peasants living in the fertile countryside, who were nevertheless impoverished by their government. He was worried that the North would bleed the South through heavy taxation, as the papal government taxed struggling Italian farmers.³⁷⁸

Alluding again to Europe, Preston finalized his argument: “It is much more easy [sic] to adopt a restrictive system than to abandon it.” He pointed out that even Britain itself had come to view its actions as a mistake: “England has said that she would abandon the system, if she could. Her statesmen, her philosophers, her manufacturers themselves, acknowledge their error.” Preston had personally seen the consequences of this system during his time in England and Ireland, where he encountered the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many. “But, with all this before us, we are called upon, in spite of reason and experience, to make this fatal experiment,” he marveled to the South; “we are called upon to plunge into this system, when all Europe, before our eyes, is struggling back to the shore, exhausted and drowning.” Adoption of the tariff and the resulting Northern manufactures would, he dreaded, bring in its wake “sectional

³⁷⁸ Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 22-24.

animosities, anti-republican monopolies, oppression of the agricultural and commercial population, smuggling, direct taxes, excise, poverty, and ruin.”³⁷⁹

Preston acted on his beliefs during South Carolina’s nullification crisis in 1828 when he agitated alongside his friend, Thomas Cooper, the primary anti-tariff figure. He stated that his personal vision for the South was outlined in James Madison’s Virginia Resolutions of 1798 – a decided states’ rights view. Preston’s contemporary and future colleague at SCC, Maximilian LaBorde, spoke laudably of the politician’s contribution to the 1828-1832 fight against the tariff. “Mr. Preston is justly entitled to a place in the first rank of speakers, rhetoricians, declaimers, or orators. He was the contemporary of McDuffie, Hamilton, Hayne, Legaré, Harper, Turnbull, and others of that brilliant galaxy [who] shed such a flood of glory upon her.” LaBorde reminisced, “In our Nullification struggle, he acted a most distinguished part, and few contributed as much to shape the policy of the State. Sagacious in counsel, his opinions always received the highest consideration from the great men with whom he was associated, and none commanded a greater influence.” Preston dynamically impacted the beliefs and actions of many Carolinians, especially the political elite and students from SCC, the young Thornwell among them, who flocked to his fiery speeches in the State House. “Nor was it the ignorant multitude alone who were led captive at his will. All alike felt the magic of his eloquence...He had to deal with mighty minds, who could alone be influenced by appeals to their reason and understanding.” While less influential than Cooper and Calhoun, Preston was a key figure who was one of the first to sway many Carolinians to not only

³⁷⁹ Preston, *Letter to the Honorable James Brown*, 25-26.

agitate against the tariff, but also to fight the Northern-based federal government if required.³⁸⁰

After Cooper delivered his famous “Calculate the value of the Union” speech in the State House in July, 1827, Preston motioned “that a committee be appointed to devise the most efficient means of opposing the passage of the proposed [tariff] law” and that it would find a way to “defeat” the law’s “oppressive operation on the agricultural and commercial interests.” This committee, which included Cooper and Preston, would “institute a correspondence with the citizens of the southern states to obtain their cooperation in these objects.” In addition to inciting other Southern states to join in belligerence toward the federal government, the movements of this states’ rights committee frequented the newspapers, widening their sphere of influence.³⁸¹

As Preston confided to his old school friend Waddy Thompson in 1830, solidarity with other Southern states was key if South Carolina was to resist the tariff. He felt that Virginia and Georgia would be most pliable. “When that step is taken Alabama and Mississippi will be roused from their petty squabbles and Louisiana be forced to ask herself whether she belongs to the slave holding or anti slave holding states,” he reasoned. Looking over the political landscape of 1830, he deduced, “[T]his slavery question will be the real issue – All others will be subscribed in it.” He told Thompson, “[For] Calhoun, McDuffie, and [Gov. James] Hamilton, I have a higher admiration than for any other three men in the United States.” These three were prominent in the anti-tariff movement. Although Cooper had the largest influence in the 1828-1832 situation, Preston electrified many Carolinians to thought and action in his own right and helped to

³⁸⁰ LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 298-299.

³⁸¹ T. Cooper, W.C. Preston, R. Henry, A. Blanding, W.F. DeSaussure, and D.J. McCord, “Woollen’s Bill: Columbia (S.C.) Proceedings,” 27-28.

lay the groundwork for not only North-South controversies between 1830 and 1860, but also sowed seeds for the future Civil War. In the 1830s, Cooper believed that Preston and John C. Calhoun were the ablest politicians in South Carolina and confided this to Nicholas Biddle.³⁸²

In the 1840s, Preston continued to defend the Southern republican government. In a speech on veto power, the senator spoke in favor of government control of potential public unrest: “[F]orms of government are instituted to control, by organized power, the wild and dangerous force, not only of individuals, but of masses.” In the South, the working class, as Preston labeled the slaves, was kept under control by a relatively small Southern elite. He preferred this check on “the will of the majorities” instead of the freedom to revolt the peasant majority exercised in massacring the French aristocrats. “The French Assembly could not brook the restraint of a co-ordinate body, nor of a strong separate Executive, but took all power into its own hands, and through blood and horror terminated in the empire.” This connected with Preston’s transatlantic experiences; he had witnessed the brutal police state that kept France in thrall. In contrast, Preston believed he had discovered a happy medium between democracy and tyranny in state sovereignty: he assured his congressional audience that “as a functionary of this federative Government, and as a Senator from a small State, I do object to any additional infusion of a spirit which would tend to consolidate our institutions and give a predominance of numbers over the separate influence of the States.” He admitted that it was quite difficult to “reconcile the sectional and conflicting interests of a wide extended and diversified empire,” particularly the differences arising between the states on “great

³⁸² Preston to Thompson, Feb. 14, 1830, July 4, 1830, Preston Papers, SCL; Cooper to Nicholas Biddle, quoted in Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 384.

permanent divisions of climate and soil, inducing, of course, the most striking differences in the industrial habits of the population [and] the accidental and most marked distinction of domestic slavery in one section.” To him, the proper answer was “a pervading spirit of compromise, and also a sufficient power to protect sectional rights and interests.”³⁸³

D. Explanation of Preston’s Inconsistencies

It may seem confusing that Preston leaned toward unionism late in life, but he nonetheless remained a champion of Southern rights. His bid for the office of Richland County representative in 1831 declared, “Born in Virginia, and [a longtime resident of] South Carolina, I have no interests or affections, but in the South.” This remained true throughout his life. Preston’s loyalties to both Virginia and South Carolina probably contributed to his shift toward unionism. Lacy Ford in *Deliver Us from Evil* emphasizes the lesser commitment to slavery and greater desire to avoid secession that was the case in the Upper South, while the opposite was true of the Lower South. Placed as he was, a man born and reared in Virginia, leading state of the Upper South, and a citizen and politician of South Carolina, leading state of the Lower South, it is not surprising that Preston’s Southern concepts were blended. In a letter he sent to James Lyons in 1834, Preston stated his firm belief that his two beloved Southern states could stand firm against her detractors. “The administration regards that State [Virginia] as lost and it is said the President denounces Virginia as the next worse state to SoCarolina – God grant they may be together for...together [they] are confident against the world in arms.”³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Preston, *Speech of the Hon. W.C. Preston, of So. Carolina, on the Veto Power, and in Reply to Mr. Clay, of Kentucky, Delivered in the Senate of the U.S., April, 1842* (Washington, Printed at the National Intelligence Office, 1842), 7, 13.

³⁸⁴ “Preston Letter to Columbia’s Citizens,” Mar. 25, 1831, Preston Papers, SCL; Lacy Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, introduction; Preston to James Lyons, 1834, Brock Collection: Lyons Family Papers, HEH.

His switch to the Whig party could appear confusing, but once it is understood that he was a staunch *Southern* Whig who adored Henry Clay, the picture is consistent. R. Means Davis, a postbellum professor at SCC, explained that, although Preston was “[o]riginally a warm supporter of Calhoun, he espoused later on the cause of Henry Clay. In this issue he lost and, disdaining to hold a position antagonistic to a majority of his constituents, he resigned in 1842.” This is not to say, however, that Preston ceased to be a warm supporter of slavery. After all, Clay advocated Unionism, but strongly supported slavery and owned a plantation with slaves himself. Clay delivered a controversial speech in 1839 stating that the militant abolitionists who would tear the nation apart to implement their beliefs were a definite threat. When Preston defended him against detractors, he received a letter of thanks. Historian William Freehling discusses this wing of the party; “Whiggery was particularly strong among merchants, lawyers [Preston’s occupation], and journalists in town centers [Columbia] dedicated to serving slaveholders’ marketing needs. The cause also swept up many planters...dedicated to selling staples in state, national, and international markets. States’ Rights Whigs...would be uncompromising” on slavery issues, unlike Democrats at the time. “Southern Whigs...would secure better markets for slaveholders’ products.” They knew how to deal with the “King Andrew” Jackson issue as well: “Whig patriarchs, although just as adept at courting voters, exuded a more high-toned, more disinterested version of civic virtue. That faintly haughty Whiggish tone particularly attracted patricians [including Preston] who found Andrew Jackson’s mobocratic crudities slightly embarrassing, maybe even a little dangerous.” Preston admired Madison’s view of republicanism, not Jackson’s democracy.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ Henry Clay to Preston, April 24, 1839, Preston Family Papers, VHS; R. Means Davis, “Raison d’Etre of

A letter Preston wrote in 1837 to a friend, Mangum, explained his pro-Southern Whig beliefs. “[W]e can defeat the Subtreasury – but...if she [the South] does not join against the bank Abbolitionism [sic] will prevail [–] state rights will perish – the South will go to the dogs.” Verifying his prominence, Preston indicated that there was talk of him being the vice-presidential candidate on his party’s ticket, but this never came to fruition. Although Preston advocated strong measures to stop the Northern-led federal government from compromising Southern rights, he hoped secession would be unnecessary, as he greatly valued the Union. He hoped that Whig victories would prevail in the South “and thus save the South from adopting the suicidal course supported by Mr. Calhoun.” Although he had come to disapprove of secession, he still stood firm for Southern states rights agitation.³⁸⁶

At the end of his political career in 1842, Preston affirmed his strong belief in republican principles in a Senate speech. “No one is more sensible than I am of the vast augmentation of Executive power during the last ten or twelve years, or has set himself in more constant opposition to it,” he declared. Demonstrating a typical antebellum Southerner’s strict interpretation view of the Constitution, he said, “I do not, however, concur...in attributing this increase of Executive power to any undue prerogative conferred upon the President by the Constitution, but to unconstitutional or extra-constitutional usurpations.” Demonstrating that membership in the Whig party was compatible with Southern Rights beliefs, he explained, “It was a vivid perception and

South Carolina College,” *The Centennial Celebration of the Granting of the Charter to South Carolina College*, 41; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 361. Resigning in 1842, Preston returned to Columbia to practice law. From 1845-1851, he served as president and professor of belles lettres at SCC (see chapters 1 and 6.) From 1852 to his death in 1860, his health was poor and his activities were limited, but he still mulled over slavery and refined his thinking and philosophy on the peculiar institution.

³⁸⁶ Preston to Judge Mangum, Washington, April 7, 1837, Preston Papers, SCL.

patriotic apprehension of this increasing power, with the firmness to oppose and the courage to make war upon it, that gave birth to the Whig party.”³⁸⁷

Long after he left politics, Preston analyzed national events of the 1850s in letters to his former SCC colleague, Lieber. Although Preston espoused unionism at this point, he still retained the states’ rights beliefs with which he had influenced so many in the past. “I do not feel that the omens...portend so sad a calamity as a dissolution of...the Union,” he explained with less zest than in his younger days. “They are very threatening, but my...long cherished opinions are that our institutions can survive in a long violent and bloody struggle.” By the word “institutions,” Preston included slavery. “The ruffianism” that had recently occurred “in Kansas and...the untoward accident of my friend Pres[ton] Brooks [SCC attendee] will foment bitter feelings and vulgar violence but such sentiments will have to corrode a long time before they dissolve the vast success of patriotic sentiments in the public heart.” Preston thought that Bleeding Kansas and the Senate Caning had proven to be unwise moves, but hoped that others shared his belief in the sanctity of the Union. “Many a Brooks may wield a cudgel and many a Sumner have his head broken before the Union can be stricken down.” Although at this particular moment Preston believed, or at least hoped, that civil war could be avoided, he still held fast to his opinion that the South’s peculiar way of life, including slavery, was worth fighting for and that the South could win such a conflict. Preston reaffirmed Southern supremacy over the North. From Virginia in 1858, he wrote to Lieber, “The ancient dominion...my Mother State, is going ahead and will hold that supremacy which Washington and Jefferson gave her. They celebrate the Fourth at Monticello and I hear at this moment the drums of the gathering population...Southern people [are] the master in

³⁸⁷ Preston, *Speech on veto power*, 3.

spite of New York and New England and all the rest of the novelties. The Ancient dominion is the true mother of men,” he assured his old friend.³⁸⁸

IV. Preston’s Proslavery Philosophy

A. Happier than peasants

Preston, alluding to his time in Europe, favorably compared happy plantation slaves with unhappy free peasants. In need of a rest, Preston made an extended visit to his brother’s Louisiana plantation in 1853. His brother, John S. Preston, had married Caroline Hampton of the wealthy and socially prominent Wade Hampton clan, and John had also amassed a fortune in his own right. In a letter to his friend and former colleague Lieber in April 1853, Preston described the enormous expanses of land, which included coast and meadows. The plantation vista, he assured Lieber, equaled the Northern Alps Preston had viewed from the French side during his time there as a young man. “The [Mississippi] River flows at the foot of my brother’s lawn,” Preston told his former SCC colleague. “My brother’s tract of land is of 16,000...acres worked by 500...hands,” he marveled. “His cane crop now luxuriantly growing is 1400 acres of land.” The beautiful estate also earned an excellent profit.³⁸⁹

Part of the estate’s pleasantness, for Preston, lay in the 500 hands that tended it. “And let me not omit to tell you,” Preston explained to his old friend, “that the negroes wear the best aspect I have seen...better than that of any peasantry I have ever seen.” Preston had commented on the Irish and Italian peasantry in detail in his European travels, in addition to observing peasants from other nations. There, he had been deeply concerned by the wretched conditions the European peasantry endured. He believed the

³⁸⁸ Preston to Lieber, July 3, 1858, and Preston to Lieber, Dec. 19, 1858, Lieber Papers, SCL; Preston to Lieber, Fincastle, VA, July 14, 1856, Lieber Papers, HEH.

³⁸⁹ Preston to Lieber, April 21, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

situation on his brother's plantation was completely the opposite. "There is no laboring population in the world, so well clothed, fed, and housed and so moderately worked," he asserted. Southern paternalism proved far superior to the European peasant state, Preston believed, as exemplified by his brother's seemingly happy retinue. Preston praised the slaves' "alertness, sprightliness, and content." The manner in which Preston wrote this letter to Lieber, his former colleague, seems to indicate that he expected Lieber to be in agreement with his sentiments concerning the superior arrangements of the Southern working class over the European.³⁹⁰

When analyzing their common acquaintance Louisa McCord's European experiences in an 1858 letter to Lieber, Preston revealed some of his own opinions. "Mrs. McCord writes me from London discont[ent]ed with every thing, even the climate of London!!! She has seen lots of sights, all Ireland, Scotland, and England, and poor lady it is all vanity and vexation of Spirit," he reported to Lieber. "The garden culture of England have [sic] not enough green to show it off. Poets corner at Westminster is a dirty hole – how can England do any thing having no negro slavery." Both Preston and Louisa McCord thought Britain was at a disadvantage without the Southern system of enslavement. Preston also recommended "T.R.R. Cobb's historical sketches of slavery" as a work of "much learning" to Lieber, demonstrating their continued interest in the study of proslavery thought.³⁹¹

B. Superiority of Southern slaves' condition to that of the Northern working class

In addition to contending that Southern slaves had better lives than European peasants, Preston also stated his belief that the Southern slaves' condition was vastly

³⁹⁰ Preston to Lieber, April 21, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

³⁹¹ Preston to Lieber, Charlottesville, VA, Oct. 20, 1858, Preston Papers, SCL.

superior to that of the Northern working classes. While a United States Senator in 1838, Preston had denied the abolitionists' assertion that Texas annexation would increase the slave population: "The slaveholding population and the slaveholding political communities may be multiplied by the proposed acquisition of territory; but I do not see that slavery or the number of slaves can be increased by it." He reminded Congress, "To this natural increase [of slaves], your laws, making the introduction of slaves [the slave trade] a felony, forbid any addition. Extend the territory as you may, you can have only those you now have and their natural increase." In fact, the extra land area might well prove more comfortable for the slaves, appealing to a paternalist like Preston. "They may be diffused over a wider surface, intermingled with a large free population, but not one additional slave can be made."³⁹²

In the 1830s Senate, Preston praised the humane nature of Southern slavery over Northern society. "Under the mild condition of Southern slavery, the negro population increases at a greater ratio than that of the whites throughout the Union, augmented as the latter is by the accession of foreigners." Southerners feared the steady immigration occurring in the North because it gave the North added power and because of the "un-American" influence upon the republic. By mentioning the higher increase of blacks over Northern whites, the senator indicated his belief that Northern free society treated its working class far more harshly than the South did its slaves. Due to the paternalism Southern slaveholders practiced, Preston stated, blacks could reproduce more quickly than free whites. He concluded that slaves' food, shelter, level of work, working conditions, and overall health must be superior for this phenomenon to have occurred. Preston boasted that slaves could reproduce faster than Northern workers, despite the fact

³⁹² Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 16-17.

that a constant stream of immigrants flowed across the Atlantic to the North to augment their numbers.³⁹³

He utilized Northern hatred of the slave trade to bolster his annexation argument in Congress. Although the United States Government outlawed the international slave trade in 1808, it still continued to secretly supply the Caribbean with African slaves. Since Texas was an independent republic, however, and possessed relatively unpatrolled waters, the trade occurred, increasing slave numbers there. If the United States annexed Texas, Preston reminded his listeners, the number of slaves would naturally decrease, since American law forbade the international slave trade, reducing the region's threat to the North.³⁹⁴

If Texas joined the Union, Preston argued that paternalism would increase, giving slaves improved lives; in fact, "nor...will the proposed annexation deteriorate the condition of the slaves now in bondage." Southern slaves' situation, already excellent in Preston's mind, would become better still: "Such as would be transferred to Texas would be placed in a more healthy [sic] climate, a more fertile soil; they would be less crowded together in large masses, and, from the enhanced value of their labor, enlist a more intense interest on the part of their owners to attend to their wants and necessities." The Western safety valve would, Preston believed, prove beneficial to black slaves as well as white citizens. As an ardent paternalist, he lamented, "[H]ow blind and mistaken is that humanity which has permitted itself to be enlisted against this measure."³⁹⁵

³⁹³ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 16.

³⁹⁴ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 17.

³⁹⁵ Preston, *Annexation of Texas*, 17.

C. Preston's Fear of Free Blacks

The threat of free blacks frightened Preston so that he further advocated slavery to ensure Southern safety. He suspected that free blacks were potential abolitionist agitators and felt they should be expelled from the region. Writing to his relative, David Campbell of Virginia, in 1836, Preston explained his personal view of the South's free black contingent. "What you suggest in regard to the free negroes in the South will be the inevitable result of the agitation of the abolition question. The expulsion of this class will be a measure of great severity but may become one of self-preservation," Preston reasoned. He disliked expelling these individuals, but preferred that measure over leaving the South unprotected from the dreaded abolition movement. "[T]he most important point of view in which they [free blacks] can be regarded at present is that they are the natural allies of the abolitionists and the medium of communication between them and the Slaves. The[y] are at this moment in the midst of a discussion on the petitions of the Abolitionists." Preston was apprehensive due to the threat of revolt that he viewed as inherent in abolitionism. Even short of revolt, Preston saw free blacks as a disruption or possible threat to Southern elite rule over the enslaved.³⁹⁶

D. Preston's Personal Defense

Although Preston always championed slavery, toward the end of his life he acknowledged concern that there was some evil connected with the institution due to the fact that so many had denounced it. After facing his fear and mulling over the matter, however, he believed that Southern slavery was not only blameless, but also beneficial. He confided his concerns to Lieber in 1856, along with the defense he had composed: "1st That slavery may be permitted between unequal races as between the European and the

³⁹⁶ Preston to David Campbell, Jan. 8, 1836, Campbell Papers, Rubenstein Library, Duke University.

African – 2nd If it be hereditary having descended through several generations 3rd If it exists in a climate more congenial to the enslaved than the dominant race.” In these statements, Preston demonstrated his adherence to the concept of race with pseudoscientific notions of the era also espoused by well-known craniologists like SCC graduate Josiah Nott and Englishman George Gliddon: the idea that the black race was biologically inferior to the white race and the climatic notion that whites could not safely labor in the hot Southern sun, but that the same exertion would not harm blacks. Preston also endorsed perpetual enslavement that had existed long-term; he had long emphasized that the South would not survive without slavery, and this point made provision for Southern protection.³⁹⁷

Following his defense, Preston then denied the abolitionists’ charge: he did not believe “[t]hat the subjugation of a weaker race by a stronger is per se a crime.” He felt religion stood on his side: “I do not believe that the enslaving of a human being and the appropriation of his labour and services is a sin either against natural or revealed religion.” Acknowledging his own participation in the system he had fervently endorsed throughout his life, he exonerated his own behavior to Lieber: “At all [events] I do not feel that in owning African slaves which have descended to me in South Carolina I am committing a sin.”³⁹⁸

E. Preston’s Study of Proslavery Writers

In addition to reasoning out his own defense of slavery in the 1850s, Preston also read proslavery authors T.R.R. Cobb, Thornton Stringfellow, and Philip Cocke. In letters to his old school friend Waddy Thompson, Preston stated that he had similar views on

³⁹⁷ Preston to Lieber, July 14, 1856, Lieber Papers, HEH.

³⁹⁸ Preston to Lieber, July 14, 1856, Lieber Papers, HEH.

slavery to Stringfellow and Cocke. Stringfellow confirmed what Preston had believed about slavery from his young adulthood. Fox-Genovese and Genovese sum up Stringfellow's philosophy: "Maintaining that in New England one family in seven was homeless, Stringfellow accused free-labor societies of undermining the family by denying proper housing to laborers." The proslavery theorist "inveigh[ed] against the squalor, prostitution, and insecurity of the laboring classes of New England, especially the...30,000 paupers." These concepts meshed well with the convictions Preston had developed while a young man in Europe and had, in turn, applied to Northern society.³⁹⁹

During a two-year period in the late 1850s when Preston resided in Virginia, he met Cocke. "The head man of this country is a Col. Philip St. George Cocke, president of the agricultural society, a very wealthy and liberal man," he wrote to Thompson. Considering the political turmoil going on at this time, coupled with Preston's concern to rationalize slavery, Preston surely brought up the subject of proslavery defense to Cocke. "He put into my hands an essay on the Scriptural and statistical views of slavery vastly the best work I have ever read on the subject especially the Scriptural," he confided to Thompson. "It has wrought a change in my views which have been worrying me all my life." Preston's statement that slavery had "always" worried him seems extremely implausible, considering his hearty defense of it during his political career and his affirmation of it in his last years. It is far more likely that Preston, weakened by age, illness, personal tragedy, and the North-South turmoil of the 1850s, temporarily wavered

³⁹⁹ Preston to Thompson, July 22 and August 10, 1857, Preston Papers, SCL: Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 37-38.

or simply used the word “always” in hyperbole. “The work is by Mr. Stringfellow a Baptist preacher. Do get it and read it,” Preston urged Thompson.⁴⁰⁰

In 1857, near the end of his life, Preston confided his views to his relative, former Virginia governor David Campbell: “At the foundation...of the [sectional agitation] is the deep conviction which we all participate in[,] that the General Government [is] controuled [sic] by a northern sentiment [which] has a fatal tendency to Abolition.” As a result, “our property and everything we hold dear in society is subjected to the mad caprice of a blind & reckless fanaticism.” He had not altered his lifetime conviction that abolition was the foolish “frenzy” of sentimentalists that threatened the South and the nation. “This I confess is my own opinion and altho[ugh] I think the institution of slavery is a most unfortunate one, yet no foreign panacea can be permitted to meddle with it.” Preston regretted the abuses occurring within slavery, but he still lauded it as the South’s best hope and none of the Northerners’ business. He also realized the Civil War would result if the North-South political struggle did not come to a speedy end. “Blood and burning and unutterable calamity would be the inevitable consequence. Even the present agitation is fraught with danger – We are a magazine round which crackers are exploding,” he prophesied with a horribly correct prescience to Campbell.⁴⁰¹

In his last years, 1857-1859, in Charlottesville, Virginia, Preston continued to be absorbed by the study of proslavery argument. He confided in correspondence to Lieber that his closest friend in Virginia was George Frederick Holmes, a professor at the nearby

⁴⁰⁰ Preston to Thompson, Cumberland County, Virginia, August 16, 1857, Preston Papers, SCL.

⁴⁰¹ Preston to David Campbell, Aug. 22, 1857, David Campbell Papers, Rubenstein Library, Duke University.

University of Virginia, who was well-known for his proslavery writings. A Mr. Holcombe, who also studied slavery, was his second closest friend in the area.⁴⁰²

V. Preston's Paternalistic Treatment of His Slaves

In one of his many letters to Lieber in 1858, Preston interpreted what he labeled the South Carolina Negro laws. "In regard to negro property I have suggested the notion that it is not absolute property but a usu-fruct," the former attorney explained. This legal term describes a holder's "right to use and enjoy the profits and advantages of something belonging to another as long as the property is not damaged or altered in any way." This legal analysis highlighted Preston's paternalistic outlook. Accounts indicate that Preston treated his slaves in a manner which he and his peers considered benevolent. While he felt concern for his slaves, Preston judged them, at times, silly or lazy.⁴⁰³

Preston, a lifelong slave owner, helped manage family slaves as a young man following his return from Europe. Corresponding with his uncle, William Preston of New Bern, Virginia, in 1820, he condoled with him on his long illness. Hoping the slave he sent would prove a comfort to his convalescent relative, he wrote, "You are entirely wellcome to the services of Ned which I am sure are not worth appoligising [sic] for." This statement displayed the typical antebellum Southern belief in slaves' natural laziness. In 1825, Preston corresponded from Columbia with a family friend, Richard Singleton, on the subject of a family slave, Edmnd [sic]. "I had the pleasure of receiving upon my return from Winnsboro this evening – your letter by Edmnd," he wrote the party. "If it does not interfere with your plantation arrangements I beg of you (in

⁴⁰² Preston to Lieber, Mar. 6, 1859, Lieber Papers, SCL.

⁴⁰³ Preston to Lieber, Dec. 19, 1858, Preston Papers, SCL.

compliance [sic] with my fathers wishes) to leave Edmnd with one of your overseers – subject to my order – and with instructions to work him as a field hand exclusively.” In this case, Preston acted for his father; it is unknown what his own opinion of demoting a slave to the field might have been, but remaining records at least indicate that, when he managed his own slaves, he treated them according to paternalistic philosophy.⁴⁰⁴

On one memorable occasion in 1847, Preston and his wife, Penelope, survived a train wreck while traveling in Virginia. Preston wrote to his mother, assuring her of his safety. “Thank God Penelope and myself have wonderfully escaped injury,” he told her. His slaves, however, had been less fortunate. “[M]y men Robert and John [were] bruised and cut so as to be unable to render assistance but they were brought on here.” Preston’s reaction indicated that he was somewhat frustrated that his servants could not aid the injured whites after the train accident. However, he immediately transported them to his place of lodging where they could receive treatment and recover from their wounds.⁴⁰⁵

In another letter to his mother, Preston discussed a few of his slaves and demonstrated his paternalistic care of them while affirming certain typical Southern masters’ opinions of slave character and behavior. “Our town [Columbia] is perfectly healthy. I know of no case of indisposition but the warm days have alarmed Barnet so that he wishes to go home [to Virginia.] I am therefore looking out for a chance to send him and if none offers I will buy or beg some horse & send him.” He felt he was indulging Barnet because, in Preston’s opinion, “His health is now very good.” Another slave “Little Isaac pants violently and is always very weak,” Preston told his mother. “He

⁴⁰⁴ Preston to Major William Preston of New Bern, VA [uncle], Saltworks at Abingdon, VA, Dec. 9, 1820, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY; Preston to Richard Singleton, Columbia, June 14, 1825, Rubenstein Library, Duke University.

⁴⁰⁵ Preston to Sarah Buchanan Preston [mother], Norfolk, Dec. 11, 1847, Preston Papers, VHS.

is my body servant, attends my library, which is also my dressing room and waits on the door so that he never has any labour to perform.” Although this may have seemed difficult to Isaac, Preston assigned him easy work by the standards of his society. “Alfred is insane but no worse than he was. [H]e is an actor of all work and a doer of nothing.” This view was typical of Southern elites, such as Lieber, who were thoroughly convinced that blacks were naturally lazy. Writing to his sister Susanna McDowell in the 1840s, Preston stated that she and his mother were welcome to come to his home in Columbia for a visit and that, even if he had not returned home when they arrived, they would be quite comfortable because “my house is furnished and supplied with servants.” Preston generally referred to his slaves with the euphemistic and polite term “servant.”⁴⁰⁶

Preston appealed to his old friend for assistance concerning a slave situation in 1853. “My dear Thompson, in your wandering about the city, I pray you to make an inquiry about my man Robert, about whom I am growing uneasy. I pray Tom Smith to come for him and drop me a note if he wants anything. If he is suffering or like to suffer I will bring him home through Virginia by a *Qua ratire* at Brother Tom’s or Sister Eliza’s where a few months Virginia slavery will I trust purify him for a residency in South Carolina.” By Southern customs, Robert would have almost certainly been flogged; for his time, Preston showed leniency to his runaway slave.⁴⁰⁷

In 1858, Preston hired out his trusted servant, Frank. He confided to a friend, “Frank is working about as a day laborer [-] very distasteful to me. I ordered him to be hired out and have requested Mr Venable [a SCC professor] to see to it.” Preston

⁴⁰⁶ Preston to Sarah Buchanan Preston [mother], Columbia, Tuesday, April 19, [1836 or 1842], and Preston to Susanna McDowell [sister], Abingdon, [1840s], Smithfield-Preston Papers, VA Tech Library System.

⁴⁰⁷ Preston to Thompson, Preston Place, March 2, [1853], Preston Papers, SCL. The year does not appear on the letter, but is inferred by references within the text to events of Preston’s life.

probably felt concern for how Frank would be treated, as many paternalistic slave owners did, but put aside his qualms most likely due to a need for money. In any case, the experiment was to be of short duration: “I shall recall him after [Christmas], for his absence is very inconvenient to me.”⁴⁰⁸

Preston seemed to have been particularly fond of his house slaves, Becky and Isaac. In a letter to Thompson soon after his wife’s death in 1853, Preston discussed the possibility of taking smaller rooms for the winter. He would not part with his favorite slaves, however: “I shall [keep] my good Becky as a housekeeper and little Isaac for a factotum.” Not long before his death in 1860, Preston “emancipated” the family. Considering that South Carolina law forbade legal manumission, the slaves still belonged to him, but he allowed them to behave to a large extent as if they were free. “[A]t her own desire I have permitted Becky poor old woman to go out and seek her fortune, with her husband Frank [a second slave with the name] for a dowry.” He further discussed his household arrangements; “There had indeed occurred a mutiny in my yard, an *émeute* [riot] hurl[e]d by little Isaac who declared that the parties would no longer submit to Becky who they declared starved them. So Isaac went off and hired himself to an hotel.” Preston allowed Isaac to run away and live a separate life, a highly unusual decision for a South Carolinian.⁴⁰⁹

Preston’s other slave, also named Frank, chose to remain at Preston Place. In correspondence with his sister Susanna McDowell in the 1850s, Preston wrote, “Frank Faust the capital fellow declared that if I would hire his wife (whom he loves and admires very much) he and she would do all the business of my household.” The master gladly

⁴⁰⁸ Preston to “Madam,” Charlottesville, VA, Dec. 14, 1858, Preston Papers, SCL.

⁴⁰⁹ Preston to Thompson, New Port, RI, Sept. 7, 1853; Preston to Thompson, Preston Place, July 17, [1856]; and Preston to Thompson, late 1850s, Preston Papers, SCL.

agreed to the bargain, “and Frank and his wife and Barrett are now my retinue.” The retired gentleman enjoyed doing “small acts of kindness” for “Frank or his wife or their children. Thus I made her and the babies happy taking them in my carriage to church yesterday. The mother and babies were in a state of great delight.” Preston wrote his sister Susanna McDowell, “Hester and Franks little daughter of less than three years old, a most sweet little thing...toddles in to Agnes for sweet cake and candy. [She is] active and funny, not able to speak a word but...kisses the Cats and hugs my knees.” Preston treated the little girl with interest and kept a supply of sweetmeats for her. His paternalistic care of his slaves continued to the end of his life. Preston not only believed that his slaves’ lives were far better than those of the European working class, but attempted to make their lives better still through acts of kindness, ranging from pieces of candy to emancipation.⁴¹⁰

Conclusion

William Campbell Preston’s two-year sojourn abroad permanently stamped his proslavery philosophy. His encounters with the working classes of the British Isles and Italy confirmed his belief that the Southern system of slavery, which provided food, clothing, and protection to the enslaved Southern working class, stood far superior to the starvation and suffering in Europe. The contrast of Jack, a slave abandoned in Paris but assisted by Preston and Legaré, further emphasized Preston’s disgust with the free labor system. Throughout his life, and particularly in the Senate, the Carolinian emphasized his view of slavery’s benefits; the “servants” had life’s necessities, unlike European peasants, and the working class was kept in check from possible revolt.

⁴¹⁰ Preston to Susanna McDowell, [post 1853], Smithfield-Preston Papers, VA Tech Library System.

The North's imitation of Great Britain, particularly in the area of abolitionist fervor, greatly disturbed Preston. In the Senate, two of his most memorable speeches, *On the Abolition Question* and *On the Annexation of Texas*, reasoned against the abolitionist threat to the South's way of life. Preston declaimed what he believed was the North's folly in imitating Britain, thus threatening the South's economic survival and the nation's unity. Preston resented the fact that the British people did not look after their own starving working-class, but encouraged the North to end Southern slavery, which, according to him, they knew nothing about.

Firsthand experience of the oppressive governments in France and Italy, as well as firsthand observations of England's Irish rule, left Preston with the belief that monarchical police states largely contributed to the misery and unrest of the populace. Throughout his career, the representative, senator, and professor strongly supported the Southern social, political, and economic structure against all potential threats. Preston fought for the supremacy of states' rights as Jefferson and Madison described them in 1798. Citing Britain's manufacturing system, which significantly augmented working class misery and the high tax rates which fell on the poor. Preston fought tariff implementation and manufacturing in the South, believing that, if the North carried out these plans, the South would become like the British working class, enslaved to the giants of industry. Preston's ideas dramatically impacted a great circle of influence, including Southerners across the region, politicians on the state and federal level, and future leaders, then SCC college students, to resist Northern aggression even to the point of civil war.

Preston's transatlantic travels shaped his personal proslavery philosophy. His observations on his brother's Louisiana plantation called forth the conviction that the slaves he observed there were far happier than any peasants he had witnessed as a result of extensive personal contact with the working classes of Europe. Noting the North's imitation of Britain, Preston stood convinced that the free working class in the North had inferior lives to those of Southern slaves. The senator then convinced others through his published speeches that slavery must remain for the good of the Southern working class – slaves – and prevent Southern economic slavery to the North. Throughout the remaining forty years of his life, Preston's proslavery philosophy remained changed by his trip to Europe, and he, in turn, effected change in the proslavery philosophy of others.

CHAPTER FIVE

A SOUTHERN SLAVEHOLDER IN SPITE OF HIMSELF: AN EXPLORATION OF FRANCIS LIEBER'S CONTRADICTIONARY IDENTITIES

Introduction

Francis Lieber was, as several scholars attest, a man of contradictions. His views lack the straightforward single-mindedness of Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston. The German native's thought concerning Europe and slavery are less absolute and more complex. As Lieber himself expressed it in a letter to his confidant George Hillard, "Here [South Carolina] I am called an abolitionist, there [the North] I am taunted as a slave holder." Michael O'Brien wrote, "[T]here was scarcely an opinion Francis Lieber held that did not unite him to a Southerner and divide him from a Northerner, or divide him from a Southerner and unite him to a Northerner."⁴¹¹

While acknowledging his multi-faceted personality, this chapter argues that striking similarities between Lieber and the other three professors exist; indeed, far more

⁴¹¹ Lieber to Hillard, [May/June 1853], Lieber Papers, HEH; O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 73, 76-78, 81. O'Brien states that Lieber's silence on slavery was complex: "Lieber lived contradictions about slavery. To his friends in the North, he offered condemnation of the institution. This was both truth and expediency: to have become an apologist for the institution would have closed doors for him, but he also honestly felt slavery to be wrong. But within his household, he acted in ways indistinguishable from the Southerners around him." He continues, "On occasions he would echo, not the antislavery, but the proslavery opinions around him" and devotes a paragraph to a couple of quotations. He cites Lieber's musings on "Slavery as a Poor Law" and includes Lieber's statement that, although many poor were oppressed in London, the British ignored American liberty because of "Uncle Tom," but ends the topic there. O'Brien affirms Lieber's importance within Southern intellectual antebellum life, especially in the areas of political economy, philosophy, and education. In a chapter entitled "Strolling Foreigners" in his landmark work *Conjectures of Order*, O'Brien includes a discussion of Lieber in the South. Pages 73-89 are an almost exact repeat of O'Brien's earlier article, "'A Cosmopolitan Dog': Francis Lieber in the South," *The Southern Review*, 25, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 308-322.

than Lieber would have admitted or perhaps even realized. Other historians' work has not fully developed this side of him, the slaveholder that believed Southern slaves enjoyed better lives than European peasants. Although he now and again claimed to despise slavery in journals and letters to Northern friends, he demonstrated the same proslavery beliefs as Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston. Lieber was secretive about his true opinions concerning the institution in his published writings, but an examination of his many letters to his close friend, Boston attorney George Hillard, to his wife, Matilda Lieber, and even to his abolitionist friend, Charles Sumner, as well as his prolific journals, reveal a great many hidden truths. Certain themes surface, such as Lieber's belief that Southern slaves enjoyed better lives than European free laborers, his disgust for abolitionism, his affection for Southern slaveholding friends, his prejudice towards blacks, and his opinion that Southern society was a better example of liberty than the North and France, which, to him, leaned too far toward democratic absolutism and communism.

It is true that Lieber, unlike Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston, admired Great Britain: "For England, next to his native land and his adopted country, he had the greatest admiration," M.R. Thayer testified of his friend. "He called her a 'royal republic'." Despite this, however, Lieber still remarked upon the distress of British workers. In addition, Lieber resided in or visited several different areas of Europe, where he sympathized with paupers firsthand. His experiences in Britain and the Continent were long and varied: "I have lived for long periods in Italy, Germany, France, [and] England." Like his friend Preston, Lieber felt that despotic governments, either of the minority or

majority, caused an enormous amount of the poverty in European nations and he strongly advocated representative rule of the people.⁴¹²

Even Lieber's espousal of free trade bears similarities to those of his fellow Southerners, and he instructed his SCC students along laissez-faire lines. While he held fast to the supremacy of federal government, "he defended the right of local self-government in all matters relating properly to the people of the several States," a contemporary wrote in 1880. "He was opposed to all efforts to confuse the boundaries which define the just limits of State and National authority. He was extremely hostile to a tariff, and a firm believer in free-trade, of which he was one of the most able champions, and to the defence [sic] of which he devoted many of his hours, writing many pamphlets and articles." After a visit to Henry Clay, famous for his high tariff support, Lieber mentioned many topics that they discussed congenially, then noted, "[E]verything was talked of except tariff; for, having the very opposite views to his, why should I have discussed it with him?"⁴¹³

I. Lieber's European Experiences

A. Germany and Serfdom

Born in Berlin, Prussia, in 1800 and residing in Germany until he turned twenty-six, Lieber had significant opportunities to observe the rulers' despotism and the various states of servitude of the masses – serfs, peasants, and workers. As a young man, he briefly served as tutor to the children of a Mecklenburg count. He remarked with

⁴¹² Thayer, "Biographical Discourse by the Hon. M.R. Thayer," and Lieber, "The Character of the Gentleman, Delivered to the students of Miami University, Ohio, on Commencement Day, 1846," in *Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, 37, 231.

⁴¹³ Thayer, "Biographical Discourse by the Hon. M.R. Thayer," 40; Lieber to Matilda, Lexington, KY, Sept. 3, 1846, in *Life and Letters of Francis Lieber*, 205.

disapproval, “Count Bernstorff does not allow his peasants to sell any cattle or horses without first having offered them to him.” In *Being American in Europe*, Kilbride concurs with this dismal description of Prussian peasants at the turn of the nineteenth century: “‘The transition from ease and opulence to extreme poverty’ invariably struck a traveler crossing into Prussia from the Netherlands, noted Thomas Jefferson.” Jefferson, as did Lieber, concluded that Prussia’s despotic government was to blame. While Lieber noted negative scenes from serfdom, he also believed that certain facets of it were praiseworthy and should be implemented within Southern slavery.⁴¹⁴

In his fascinating comparison of Prussian Junkers and Southern plantation masters, historian Shearer Davis Bowman uncovers striking parallels between the two systems that apply directly to Lieber’s philosophy, specifically to his later life as a slaveholder. “The analogies between antebellum planters and contemporaneous Junkers derive first and foremost from structural and functional parallels between plantations and Junker estates...as at the same time commercial agricultural enterprises and authoritarian political communities. Plantations and knight’s estates produced generally profitable cash crops – most notably Southern cotton and tobacco, East Elbian wheat and wool – for an international capitalist market then centered in England.” Although serfs technically received freedom in 1807, during Lieber’s early childhood, much of the system remained even into the 1850s: “[E]nserfed peasants...had substantive historical and legal claims upon the parcels of land they farmed in return for dues and services owed to their manorial lords.” Bowman explains, “Despite their legal status as ‘free’ men, until mid-

⁴¹⁴ Lieber, 1825 Diary Entry, *Life and Letters*, 61; Kilbride, *Being American in Europe*, 62. This study of Lieber employs the terms “German” and “Prussian,” since Lieber identified with his specific state as well as the region, and often spoke of “Germany” in national terms. The author is aware, however, that since Germany did not become a unified state until 1871, the area was a disjointed mass of 300 separate principalities during most of Lieber’s life.

century these contractual workers remained subject to much the same species of ‘feudal’ political authority that the Junkers had exercised under serfdom...the pre-1848 knight’s estate [was] an ‘almost completely independent governmental authority...a state within a state.’ Bowman’s work is extremely helpful in understanding Lieber’s proslavery ideas through the lens of his experiences with serfdom.⁴¹⁵

Bowman strongly asserts the similarities between “the issues of patriarchy [Junkers] and paternalism [Southern masters.]” Considering what he witnessed of serfdom during twenty-six years as a Prussian citizen and his return visits to Germany after his move to South Carolina, it seems more than probable that Lieber had an older German way of viewing slavery – he viewed it through the lens of Prussian serfdom. The institution of his native land prepared him to accept the institution of his adopted land. Bowman explains, “We cannot understand antebellum planters, or...proslavery thought...without investigating the Old South’s particular blend of racism, republicanism, and westward expansion. Likewise, we cannot comprehend the Junkers, or the Old Prussian thought that helped to defend their interests and stature, without examining East Elbia’s particular heritage of...corporatism (or estatism.)”⁴¹⁶

Delineating his interpretation of Southern slavery as a feudal system, Bowman then states that the Prussian system descended directly from the same place. The word “Junker” meant “young lord or nobleman,” and in the first half of the nineteenth century, these individuals had strong connections with the “Prussian officers’ corps and royal

⁴¹⁵ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 4-5, 18. Bowman includes a brief remark about Lieber on page 39: “The most widely known native of East Elbia to make his home in the Old South was Francis Lieber (1807 [sic] - 1872) of Berlin, who studied at the Prussian universities of Berlin and Halle before migrating to America in 1827. Ironically, he had to repress ‘a growing distaste for slavery’ during his tenure as a professor of history and political economy at South Carolina College from 1835 to 1856.” As previously stated, a major part of this argument is to demonstrate that Lieber was proslavery, not antislavery, for the majority of his life.

⁴¹⁶ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 4-5, 16.

bureaucracy.” Definite links existed between Prussia and Polish serfdom, the latter of which Lieber discusses in his European travel journal in the 1840s. Parts of Poland had been annexed to the German provinces in the skirmishes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, so Prussia was “linked – not least through the partition of Poland – with agrarian Eastern Europe.” When Lieber mused about serfdom, he sometimes wished the South would improve slavery by adopting certain aspects of Prussian or Polish serfdom. For example, in those areas, serfs were attached to the land, families stayed together, and the lord could not buy or sell these laborers. Until 1848, lords wielded enormous power over “free cottagers and servants”; in fact, “the Junkers’ authority over his domestic servants approximated that of a planter over his chattel slaves,” and Lieber made this connection.⁴¹⁷

Paternalism, with its extremes of generosity and cruelty, existed in both societies: “Of course, how much and what kind of corporeal punishment a planter or Junker meted out to his minions varied according to their degree of resistance or recalcitrance as well as the autocrat’s personality and disposition, which could manifest themselves in behavior that ran the gamut from callous cruelty to kindly compassion.” In fact, “[i]n 1843 the Junker-dominated provincial assembly of Brandenburg declared that the manorial lord’s right to inflict corporal punishment on his servants was valuable and even ‘indispensable.’” Junkers, in other words, had James Henry Hammonds as well as James Henley Thornwells. It is interesting to note that, although Lieber did practice paternalism, he exemplified less concern and more racism toward his slaves than did the English-born

⁴¹⁷ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 6-9, 20.

Cooper or the American-born Thornwell and Preston, and this could well be a result of spending his formative years spent amidst the Prussian and Polish system of serfdom.⁴¹⁸

B. Fighting in France

During Lieber's youth, he not only witnessed Prussian conditions, but also noted the poverty brought on by oppressive governments in other European nations. For example, he learned to hate French despotism early in life. At six years of age, he personally observed the French overtaking Prussia, and cried bitterly from his window. He later recorded a vow to kill Napoleon: "I rushed to my room...and took a most solemn oath...that I would study French, enter the French army, come near Napoleon's person, and rid the earth of that son of crime and sin." This, although more dramatic, was not unlike Cooper's desire to fight Robespierre in the 1790s. To the thirteen-year-old Lieber, "the idea of sacrificing two armies, while the sacrifice of one life might stop all misery, seemed to me preposterous." His negative assessment of French government was further sealed during the time he spent actually fighting against Napoleon's army in 1815 as an underage soldier. He evinced mixed feelings toward the French peasantry as he interacted with them, but these encounters, both good and bad, convinced him of their unfortunate state, and Lieber railed against French despotism for the rest of his life.⁴¹⁹

In 1815, French peasants were left in even more dire straits than usual due to the war. One evening, Lieber and some comrades walked through a village, foraging for food. "It was a sad charge!" he noted, seeing the devastation. "In one house, stripped of everything, we found a young woman with an infant, by the side of her father, who had been beaten and wounded by some marauding enemies." Rather than providing food for

⁴¹⁸ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 6, 8, 20.

⁴¹⁹ Lieber to George Hillard, NY, April 19, 1858, in *Life and Letters*, 298-299.

the soldiers, they provided food for her, a citizen of the enemy nation. “She asked us for a piece of bread; we had none. We gave her some potatoes which we had just found, but she said she had nothing to cook them with.” This specter of poverty haunted Lieber’s mind.⁴²⁰

On another foraging trip, Lieber and his fellow soldiers “suffered dreadfully from the cravings of hunger. I found a peasant in the cellar of a house near the road, and threatened to shoot him unless he gave us bread.” In testimony to the dire straits of the French peasantry, “He told us he had none. I told my comrade to hold him, while I would seem to prepare to shoot him; he brought us a small loaf.” This man had so little food that he preferred to risk his life in a quick death rather than to face lingering starvation.⁴²¹

At another time, when Lieber lay wounded on the ground, he had another sort of encounter with the French working class: “My strength was fast going, and when, towards evening, I was awakened by the peasants sent to collect the wounded, but who found it more profitable to plunder the dead or such of the wounded as could offer no resistance, and to throw both into the fosses [ditches], the common grave of friend and foe, I could not speak.” Lieber feared the brutality of these rapacious peasants, who would ignore rules of common decency. “They searched for my watch and money, and rudely stripped me of my clothes, which increased my pains and renewed the bleeding of my wounds.” These men were in such financial straits that they felt that bloody clothes possessed value. “At last I was enabled to move my eyelids, and this motion, as well as, probably, the expression of my look, showed them...I was sufficiently sensible to be aware of all the horrors of my situation.” Outside intervention was required, however, to

⁴²⁰ Lieber, “Personal Reminiscences of the Battle of Waterloo,” in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, vol. 1, 156, 159.

⁴²¹ Lieber, “Battle of Waterloo,” 160.

stop their scavenging. “When they had nearly finished their work I heard a loud, threatening voice, a shot, and a scream of one of the peasants, upon which they all absconded.” Force, rather than human concern, regulated their behavior.⁴²²

On the other hand, some French peasants were incredibly kind to Lieber, helping to save his life during the war. “At about nine o’clock he [a soldier] returned...with some peasants, who dressed me in the clothes of the dead...and made a litter, by means of guns, upon which they carried me into the valley, to a farm where the surgeons were.” A few days later, when Lieber was billeted in a peasant home, “the proprietor of the house – an old man – came, slowly and shyly, into his own house. He made some porridge, and in a manner which betrayed much feeling tried to feed me, but I could eat but very little. The poor old man had himself a son in the army.” Unlike the thieves, this farmer showed humanity.⁴²³

He experienced being a beggar himself while in France. Accidentally left behind by the army, he crept out of the peasant’s house and lay prone on the roadside. “Many persons, passing by, threw me money; but what was I to do with money?” he remembered. Later, Lieber favored organizations for working-class uplift and rehabilitation over monetary donations. Later on his journey, he attempted to find a man to whom he had “a letter of introduction and credit.” He recounted, “I took a large stick, and, slowly dragging myself along, left the hospital. I was obliged often to rest on the steps in the street, and people invariably showed great kindness to me.” Again, Lieber

⁴²² Lieber, “Battle of Waterloo,” 164.

⁴²³ Lieber, “Battle of Waterloo,” 165.

was offered coin instead of directions; “People very often put money in my hand, and did not know what to make of it when I refused accepting it.”⁴²⁴

Lieber’s experiences with the French poor influenced his feelings and treatment of his slaves in later years. Lieber considered his slaves well-fed, well-clothed, and though generally well-meaning, not to be trusted. Although he sympathized with the working classes of all nations, he felt them far below the elite and middle classes in capacity for noble feelings, character, behavior, and potential. Lieber also believed that threats and stern conversation were necessary to keep working-class persons in line. Despite the fact that he professed reluctance to employ the argument, Lieber definitely believed, and stated, that Southern slaves’ condition was far more tenable than that of the European peasants.

C. Rome, Greece, and Britain

During his teenage years in the 1810s in Europe, Lieber continued to study and denounce Europe’s sociopolitical flaws, even those of his Prussian homeland. In addition to personal liberty, Lieber and a small band of friends longed for German unification, or at least cooperation, formed a secret society, and published a small collection of patriotic plays and songs. After a member of a similar secret society killed a government official, Prussian authorities panicked, even investigating law-abiding societies. Because Lieber and his two associates had once met the assassin, Prussian authorities questioned Lieber, seized his journals and papers for examination, and on the basis of suspicion alone, placed him in prison for four months in 1819. After his release, he took the customary German university entrance exam, but despite his high marks, authorities denied him

⁴²⁴ Lieber, “Battle of Waterloo,” 166, 169.

entrance to all Prussian universities due to his alleged disloyalty. He instead attended the University at Jena, majored in mathematics, and received a doctorate just a few months later.⁴²⁵

After the authorities sent him back to Berlin, the young man decided to leave the country secretly in 1821 to help the Greeks win freedom from the Turks in their revolution. Lieber would, indeed, experience severe disillusionment due to the Greek peasantry's behavior. His close friend, Barthold Niebuhr, recorded Lieber's experiences: "Lieber...went as a volunteer to Greece, and at length returned, partly not to die of hunger, partly because the rascality of the [Greeks] and their cowardice became unsufferable to him. His...tales fill the hearer with horror."⁴²⁶

Envisioning the Greeks with their ancient Athenian culture, and expecting help and good treatment since he came to aid their cause, Lieber and some other young men reached the Peloponnesus by ship. Two British officers "gave us a very disheartening account of the condition of the Greeks, and described them as great rogues," Lieber remembered. "They pitied us, they said, and declared that we were certainly going to our destruction." Due to their youth and idealism, the boys did not listen. On embarking the ship, "others were awaiting us, and one of them had already been received in the true Grecian style – he had been robbed," Lieber explained. In fact, the Greeks did not provide Lieber and his comrades with any food: "The promise to send the bark, and to supply us with food, was not kept; but I shall not mention in future similar falsehoods, for they occurred daily during our sojourn in Greece..."⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 27-31; Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 22-26.

⁴²⁶ Barthold Niebuhr to Madame Hensler, Rome, June 7, 1822, in *Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, vol. 1, 15.

⁴²⁷ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 35-36.

In addition to the total lack of interest the army demonstrated, Greek peasants proved disappointing to the young, idealistic soldiers. When traveling to another town in hopes of better treatment and a chance to aid the Greek revolt, Lieber and his comrades engaged “drivers” to assist their transport. Afterward, they felt that “the laziness, cowardice, and untruthfulness which we had witnessed and suffered here, could not be exceeded anywhere else.” Lieber would later make similar observations about Columbia’s slave population. When rain began, “the drivers wished to return on account of the rain storm,” leaving the young men to march in torrents “up to our waists.” Later that evening, while traveling between towns, Lieber and his friends suffered even greater indignities: “Here, in the defile, one of our drivers, who had deserted in the night, had brought together sixty armed peasants, who took our horses from us, threatening to shoot us if we made any resistance.” Lieber was convinced at this point that the Greeks did not care about throwing off tyranny or implementing a republican government, but only for the needs of the moment. He believed that the Greek people did not deserve a republican government since they were unwilling to exert themselves for one or even treat their liberators decently.⁴²⁸

Lieber was appalled by the extent of dirt in Greece. On one occasion, he and his company were “directed to a house whose former occupants had died of a contagious fever; it was a filthy abode.” The peasants’ ignorance and filth led to illness and death. The church that kept the people in its thrall exhibited similar features. “The dirty priests, the strange, profane gestures, the frequent kissing of the pictures [also not hygienic], the continual crossing and kneeling of the whole assembly, the nasal twang of the priests, and the equally disagreeable responses of the congregation made a very painful impression.”

⁴²⁸ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 37-38.

Lieber's account was similar to that of his Southern soul mate, William Preston, who avowed that the Catholic Church kept the peasants in thrall in France and Italy.⁴²⁹

The one thing Lieber admired in the peasants was their relative literacy. “[E]very Greek, whether priest or peasant, [carries] his writing materials, consisting of a brass pencase and inkstand, in his belt near his weapons.” He was impressed to discover that “[i]n Greece, as well as all western Asia, the method of instruction prevails which has become known [as] the Lancastrian system.” The people taught each other: “Any one who can write is called a grammarian; and I have been surprised to find that many of the peasants, and the women frequently, could read and write with the little instruction they receive.” Later, Lieber stood squarely in favor of slave literacy despite South Carolina law, expressing great approval when his son taught one of the family's slaves to read and write.⁴³⁰

En route from Greece to Italy, Lieber and his comrades found themselves surrounded by Greek peasants on shipboard. “Our store of provisions consisted of nothing but bread, owing to our penniless condition,” Lieber wrote of himself and his fellows. “The Greeks cooked and fried their food, and did not offer us a morsel during the nine days' passage.” A cryptic comment indicated that additional atrocities occurred: “But this book has given a detailed account of our experience in Greece until our departure, and therefore it is unnecessary,” Lieber emphasized, “to relate the suffering we endured at the hands of these people during these nine days, and the forty-one we afterwards spent with them in quarantine.” Lieber summed up his liberation adventure; “[T]he cowardice and incapacity of the Greeks made them unfit to defend or free their

⁴²⁹ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 37, 39.

⁴³⁰ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 39.

country...no individual, not even an experienced commander, could assist them.” The emotions he felt toward the Greeks mirrored his later feeling towards slavery and the potential liberating force of abolitionism.⁴³¹

Spending time afterwards in Rome in the early 1820s, Lieber observed how the Catholic Church and its firm ecclesiastical-political rule kept the people in bondage. Lieber believed it unlikely that anything could “be accomplished for the people of Italy until the priesthood is suppressed.” He recorded a conversation he had with a “fat priest.” In this era, weight frequently provided a reliable indication of an individual’s income. This priest’s fatness stood in contrast to the inhabitants’ lean condition. Historian John Davis relates that, at this time, “the vast majority of Italians were engaged in agriculture as labourers or peasant farmers. Levels of agricultural productivity were low and most rural communities hovered precariously on the margins of subsistence under constant assault from crop failures, natural disasters, and disease.”⁴³²

Despite this situation, Lieber reported, “Priests daily receive one franc. Now they are...in Laricia [La Riccia, in southern Italy], where there are a thousand inhabitants, and in Albano. Terrible that such a poverty-stricken town should have to support twelve of these priests, who are better clad and better fed than the inhabitants.” In return for the peasants’ sacrifice, Lieber queried, “What do [the priests] do in return? They do not till the ground; they do not build or instruct; they do nothing to preserve order.” What they did only continued the government’s status quo: “They hold daily two services.” Like Lieber, Thornwell and Preston also gravely disapproved of Catholic governments.⁴³³

⁴³¹ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 41.

⁴³² Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 48; John Davis, “Economy, Society, and the State” in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, 236.

⁴³³ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 48.

Naples, another area Lieber visited, was in Southern Italy near La Riccia. Historian David Kertzer states that “the clergy formed a significant portion of the entire population, especially in the South: the Kingdom of Naples, with about 4 million inhabitants, had 90,000 priests.” According to Lieber’s calculation, supporting this number of priests would add to the inhabitants’ poverty. The poor quality of food for Neapolitan peasants caught Lieber’s attention: “[T]he children in Naples...come out with plates on which are pieces of bread, and sour milk is poured over it by old women who go about selling it.”⁴³⁴

Following his sojourn through Italy, due to assistance from the German ambassador to Rome, Lieber received permission to return to Berlin with immunity in 1823. Despite this promise, the police monitored Lieber throughout the next year as he studied at different universities. In 1824, on mere suspicion of involvement in a plot to overthrow the French and German governments, he was imprisoned for a year. After his ambassador friend intervened repeatedly, the police finally released Lieber with the agreement that he would remain in Berlin for further questioning.⁴³⁵

Lieber’s frustration mounted; most of all, he feared another imprisonment. Leaving Berlin in the middle of the night, he escaped to Great Britain in 1826. The British received him well; he worked odd jobs in London while learning English. Although the four professors discussed in this dissertation had similar beliefs on the subject of Continental governments, Lieber maintained a far higher opinion of Great Britain than the other three, not surprising since he found asylum there after a harrowing Prussian past. His writings frequently compliment Britain’s liberty and institutions.

⁴³⁴ David Kertzer, “Religion and Society, 1789-1892,” in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, 182; Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 47.

⁴³⁵ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 31, 43, 52-58.

Despite this, he nonetheless declared superior the situation of Southern slaves to the British poor.⁴³⁶

Deciding to immigrate to the United States, the expatriate set sail for Boston in 1827. Looking forward to the type of career Prussia had denied him, he wrote, “I look forward eagerly to...an honorable and useful position in a new republic.” He continued, “There has never existed, to my knowledge, a government...so entirely for the good of the people” and “in my opinion a republic is superior to all [other forms of government].” During his first weeks in the United States, he reported to his family in Berlin in astonishment, “Since my arrival in America I have not seen a beggar, and I have been in three seaports.” During his early years in the United States, living in Boston and Philadelphia, Lieber alternated between teaching and writing for his support. The United States granted him American citizenship in 1832, five years after his arrival.⁴³⁷

In his work *The Stranger in America*, published in 1835, Lieber presented antislavery views. It is important to remember that his only friends at this time were abolitionists and he had not, as yet, traveled south. Even his antislavery arguments, however, exposed a racist belief that blacks stood inferior to whites and put forward only minor flaws of the institution. Lieber wrote that slavery confused property concepts, was morally questionable, defied modern trends, and was economically unsound. Although he later clearly contradicted these beliefs, at this moment Lieber stated his approval for political equality for blacks, stating that “when fairly educated, [blacks] stand on quite as high a level of mental development as the *lowest* [italics mine] of the whites.” He would, in future writings, contrarily state his opinion that whites had, by cultural tradition,

⁴³⁶ Lieber, *Life and Letters*, 60-64.

⁴³⁷ Lieber to Frederick William Lieber and family, Manchester, May 12, 1827 and June 10, 1827; and Lieber to Matilda, Boston, July 6, 1827, in *Life and Letters*, 69-72.

moved far above blacks' attainments. Lieber did not think that societal amalgamation, a biological and social mixing of black and white races, was wise or beneficial, desiring the purity of the white race to remain unmixed. In fact, he advocated a limited segregation of the two races after political equality was achieved. Although Lieber desired a gradual emancipation at that particular moment in time, he was convinced that the decision should rest with the state legislatures, not the federal government.⁴³⁸

In Frank Friedel's 1947 biography, *Francis Lieber: Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, he argues that Lieber, while not in favor of instant emancipation due to the fact that slavery stood in the province of state law, did align with moderate abolitionist beliefs. "[P]rivately he deplored slavery and all its ramifications," Friedel wrote. "He chafed and ultimately became embittered under his self-imposed muzzle [at SCC], but kept quiet rather than jeopardize his position." The biographer holds that "During many years of residence in South Carolina and of careful study, Lieber retained his early views [on slavery] almost unchanged." In addition, Friedel states that Lieber "was not alone in his moral repugnance toward slavery. He had early discovered that many a prominent upcountry planter and professional man shared his disgust." Interestingly, Friedel includes Preston as another individual who disliked slavery. This dissertation chapter, in contradistinction to the biography, contends that, as a result of the influences of travel in Europe, Lieber was primed to espouse proslavery belief when he entered the South, beliefs that strengthened during his Columbia residency.⁴³⁹

In 1833, Lieber made his first South Carolina connections, men he would respect deeply. He recorded in his journal, "Well received in Washington, and became

⁴³⁸ Lieber, *A Stranger in America* (London: Richard Bently, 1835; reprint Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 189-190, 193-209.

⁴³⁹ Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 125, 135.

acquainted with Calhoun [and] Preston.” Lieber’s respect for and friendship with Southern slaveholders, then, began even before his move to the South. When his friend Charles Sumner planned a visit to the capital city, Lieber promised him, “You shall have letters from me to Legaré, Preston, [and] Calhoun.” He remarked that the Senate seat in South Carolina was “worthily filled.” In 1835, Lieber accepted the position of Professor of History and Political Economy of SCC. In 1844, Lieber visited Europe for the first time since moving to America, staying several months.⁴⁴⁰

D. Travels to Europe as an American

While visiting Europe, this time as an American citizen, Lieber described feelings and observations similar to Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston’s. He observed the poor, but was not as sympathetic to their plight as were the other three, possibly due to his Prussian upbringing. The professor also noted the dirty, rundown nature of certain Old World cities. Ever observant of political injustice, he noted the oppression of 1840s Continental governments. Lieber declared that his enslaved retinue at home in Columbia enjoyed a better life than the free workers he observed toiling in Europe. While describing sobering scenes of German peasants, he still spoke well of serfdom, still present in areas of Germany, Poland, and Russia.

In Holland, Lieber expressed his decisive opinion on the superior position of Southern slaves to that of European free workers. In Amsterdam, he observed in his journal, “I had just met two old women dragging, like horses, dogs, and men two separate canal boats. I wonder what Betsy would say to all this?” Betsy, a South Carolinian slave of Lieber’s, served as his cook in addition to performing other household duties. “She

⁴⁴⁰ Lieber, 1834 Journal; Lieber to Sumner, Sept. 16, 1834; and Lieber, 1835 Diary, in *Life and Letters*, 69-72, 99, 101, 105.

would look down on them [the canal-dragging women] as poor slaves and brutes, she being the lady.”⁴⁴¹

Lieber particularly disliked seeing female workers engaged in the heavy labor generally reserved for men, whether slave or free. During his time in Germany, Lieber compared the system of German serfdom and Southern slavery in his observation of farm work. “I saw in Alsace and Baden women ploughing,” Lieber wrote in his travel journal. “The same had often made me sad in Carolina when I saw negro women do it as a thing belonging to slavery, and now here.” Lieber’s version of paternalistic slave care assigned indoor work to female slaves and the heavier outdoor work to male slaves. Making a fascinating color comparison between the appearance of German peasants and Southern slaves, Lieber remarked, “The faces of some women...in Wurttemberg [are] shocking, so worn, weatherbeaten and almost black.” These peasant women’s condition of servitude had even turned their skin to the color of enslaved Africans. In accordance with Lieber’s observations, Max Weber attested that, at this time in German history, peasants stood in “complete subjection to the will of the lord” and depended on his favor for their portion of the crop.⁴⁴²

Although Lieber noted the suffering of laboring German peasant women, he generally felt that serfdom was a fairly benevolent institution. His conversations with a Russian noblewoman and her daughter, who themselves had a large plantation of Polish serfs, revealed his belief that serfs and South Carolina slaves received benevolent

⁴⁴¹ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” in *Like a Sponge Thrown into Water: Francis Lieber’s European Travel Journal of 1844-1845*, Charles and Ilona Mack, eds. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 39.

⁴⁴² Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 68; Max Weber, quoted in Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 168.

treatment from their masters. Since Poland was partitioned between Germany and Russia at this time, Polish serfdom existed in both societies.⁴⁴³

“On my way through Linz to Vienna on the Danube,” Lieber wrote in 1844 to his wife, “I saw two ladies who in their simple yet expensive dress showed they had purses. Their carriages contained a Jardin ambulant [moving garden] as one might well call a box between the coachman’s seat and the coach, filled with flower pots.” Their wealth stood equal to that of Lieber’s elite friends in Columbia. “I spoke to them,” Lieber recounted; “They were Russian ladies, the wife of the governour of Warsaw and her daughter, dame d’honneur [lady of honor] to the empress.” Agrippine de Pisaren and her daughter were similar to the Southern plantation mistresses of South Carolina. “The mother made me laugh all the time,” Lieber remembered. She told the German-American: “I am not rich; that is to say I am very rich, I have a great deal of land, but I have many debts!” This economic state was no stranger to Southern planters.⁴⁴⁴

Lieber wrote about this conversation in both his journal and in a letter to Matilda. “We talked much of the serfs. It is just like at our place.” Lieber compared the lord-serf condition to the master-slave situation of the Lieber household in particular and South Carolina as a whole. Agrippine de Pisaren made “[t]he same complaints of serfs as we of negroes,” Lieber attested. “She finds herself better served by the hotel girls in Germany than at home by her own slaves.” The German professor left behind records of finding fault with his own slaves’ labor. In addition to complaining about slaves and serfs’ low intellect and poor job performance, Lieber and de Pisaren also agreed on the burdensome nature of paternalistic responsibilities: “The accumulation of house serfs by natural

⁴⁴³ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 38, 168-169.

⁴⁴⁴ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Sept. 29, 1844, HEH. Lieber wrote down the statement of de Pisaren in French; I translated it into English.

increase and inheritance becomes a real calamity, just as with us.” Since they “are never sent into the field,” Lieber explained, the realization of a profit proved difficult or even impossible. The German-American believed that the demand on the master to care for his serfs or slaves proved immense and even burdensome.⁴⁴⁵

In his European travel journal, Lieber noted certain humanitarian advantages of serfdom over Southern slavery. The fact that “[n]o serf [was] to work longer than 60 years old” prevented the elderly from exertion beyond means of their health and strength. The “[l]ate law that no family may be separated” circumvented the tearing apart of husbands and wives, parents and children that occurred within Southern slavery. Lieber consistently evinced a far lower opinion of the working class than of the middle and elite classes, no matter what nationality or color: “The serfs are mere boors who cultivate for themselves and pay so much – I believe 20 rubles a year per head.” Through his approval of serfdom, Lieber expressed a form of “slavery in the abstract,” the belief that some form of slavery proved beneficial to both black and white laborers.⁴⁴⁶

While in Europe, Lieber manifested a few racially prejudiced observations. His feelings about Jews establish a sort of intermediary between his feelings for Saxons and those he expressed toward Africans. “The faces [in Britain] are not so well marked, the heads not so fine...as in America, which I know does not say much of itself, for the lowest Polish Jews have some of the finest heads,” Lieber wrote in his journal in London. Lieber’s feelings towards Jews as a lower race may well have resulted from his German upbringing. In Prussia, he noted the meaning behind eye color while in the town of

⁴⁴⁵ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Sept. 29, 1844, HEH. Lieber wrote “It is just like at our place” in French; I translated it into English.

⁴⁴⁶ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 74. The idea of “slavery in the abstract” is explained in Fox-Genovese and Genovese’s work, *Slavery in White and Black*.

Förster: “Nearly all soldiers [have] brown or black eyes but officers blue, yet no different class.” His upbringing in Prussia and residence in South Carolina had taught him to think of outward differences as not only part of a racial system, but also a class system.⁴⁴⁷

In commenting on Lieber’s racial and ethnic feelings, Michael O’Brien contends that Lieber did not believe that “all whites were superior to all blacks, partly because he was anxious to demonstrate that some whites were superior to other whites...especially France, Germany, and England.” Referring to the German’s strong belief in Saxon superiority, O’Brien adds, “This was then an ambiguous skepticism of race, because it was delivered in the tones of a disdainful Prussian, looking eastward to barbaric hordes sharing the same skin color.” He believes that Lieber’s “recognition of the slave’s humanity” probably caused him to disagree with categorizations of the slave with animals. However, Lieber considered the slave as being on par with animals in at least one passage. Although it is evident that Lieber felt Northern European whites were superior to other peoples (for example, he deemed Polish Jews inferior), his writings indicate that he felt blacks to be still lower on the biological scale.⁴⁴⁸

Despite the fact that Lieber manifested class and ethnic prejudice at times, and that his sympathy for the poor fluctuated between accounts, Lieber nonetheless carefully noted with concern the conditions of poverty he witnessed in Europe. While in Belgium, Lieber wrote that a friend “takes me to see Brussels lace making.” He marveled at the complicated work: “The finest [laces] are sewn altogether, i.e., form the ground, and the flowers on it.” Despite the difficulty, the work was not well rewarded, Lieber noted with regret: “Women earn from 2 to 3 ½ francs a day hard work. Begin early.” The professor

⁴⁴⁷ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 18, 70.

⁴⁴⁸ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 76-77.

believed that long hours of toil should be justly compensated, and noticed that the Brussels lace manufacturers failed to do this.⁴⁴⁹

Lieber did not omit the negative conditions in his former Prussian homeland. For instance, he wrote in his journal about the particular poverty of Osnabruck, a city in northeast Germany: “They [Osnabruck’s working class] earn here from 8 to 12 Grote, a man thrashing in winter from 3 in the morning for 8 Grote per diem. One Grote about one cent.” Lieber believed that the length of the hours did not line up properly with the rate of pay. The workers obviously agreed with his assessment: “Great numbers emigrate from Osnabrueck to America and always write that they immediately marry and all goes well...They would all go had they the means.” The German-American believed that workers in the United States, even Southern slaves, had better opportunities than those on the Continent. In another passage, he noted the bad conditions present in certain Prussian cities. Of his birthplace, Berlin, he wrote, “Fearful smell of stagnant gutters. Low houses, horrid pavements...All Germany and Prussia not excepted dislikes Berlin...and complains of dearness and dirt there.” While in Mannheim, he remarked, “Mannheim reminds me all over of Berlin; straight streets, insipid houses, stinking gutters.” The working classes of these cities would have no choice but to reside in these filthy areas.⁴⁵⁰

During his visit to London, Lieber witnessed the “Huddled masses.” While going past the “East India dock by the railroad,” he reported, “Into what narrowness and dirt and poverty we looked down from the railway.” The professor noticed many prostitutes in various British towns, many of whom showed obvious signs of poverty. Lieber wrote in his journal: “½ past 8 at Southampton, which again swarms with public girls...Some

⁴⁴⁹ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 33.

⁴⁵⁰ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 47, 61, 76, 101.

dressed well, others, as in London young (15, 16 years) with dirty shawl, bare neck, as in London and Manchester.” Considering the queen’s irrelevance to their difficult lives, he thought the monarchical zeal of paupers to be rather ridiculous: “A low, poor, dirty woman asked me in St. James Park ‘when will Her Majesty pass?’”⁴⁵¹

Lieber engaged in a philosophical discussion about the British working classes at the home of Joseph Parker, “great parliament lawyer and solicitor of the Charity Commission” and his wife, “granddaughter of Priestly.” His wife said that “repudiation has had the worst possible effect on the English working classes.” When the government denied the working class something they felt they should receive, Parker’s wife told Lieber, “They say, that’s right, that’s republicanism, so we will do, when we have the power.” This statement made Lieber and the Parkers wonder if revolt might not result.⁴⁵²

While walking about London, he refused money to at least one beggar. On meeting one “Irish beggar woman,” he responded to her request with, “My poor woman I have not a solitary copper,” despite having a good salary. On leaving London, he wrote, “Goodby England...shilling-sucking land.” In all, Lieber felt less sympathy to the working classes when compared to Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston; he showed his Southern slaves less consideration, as well. Nonetheless, Lieber later attested that the suffering of the British poor was inexcusable and that the government should improve the situation. This observation doubtless stemmed from personal encounters with the poor experienced while living in England for a year before his move to America and during his European travels in 1844.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 7, 9-11, 21-22.

⁴⁵² Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 7, 9-11, 21.

⁴⁵³ Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 7, 9, 10, 11, 21.

Ever the political scientist, Lieber noted with great disapproval the police presence and lack of personal freedoms in Continental governments. Traveling from Rouen to Paris, he observed, with much the same feelings as had Preston, the possessing presence of soldiers in the role of police: “How unspeakably mean the soldiers look,” he wrote. Austria proved still worse: “I dislike exceedingly traveling in Austria,” he reported in a letter to Matilda. “To [be required to] have a permit from the police to travel more than 2 German miles, each time one wishes to go!” In his next missive, he added, “I had left at last abominable Austria...the government, and the manner a person must live there!” The situation was all the more disheartening, Lieber confided, because “The people are kind-hearted and I have become acquainted with officers and persons of character...true-hearted souls and noble-minded Germans as there live.” Lieber particularly sympathized with a “poor modest student from Galicia, who with maiden-like voice and look says: ‘One must hope that a time will come when it will no longer be against the law to wish for the unification of Poland.’” No doubt remembering his own days as a young student oppressed by the Prussian government, Lieber pitied the Polish student in his journal, “The hectic flush, the tremulous voice, the resignation and desire to think nothing wrong, the mildness of the victim were heart-rending.”⁴⁵⁴

His twenty-seven years living in Europe, as well as his year-long sojourn there in 1844 and 1845, influenced his beliefs on slavery and republican government. In 1846, he wrote, “I simply speak to you as...a man who in his boyhood saw the flows and ebbs of the Napoleonic era and heard the [E]uropean cry of oppression, and has from that great time to this longed or labored for liberty in speech and book, and in the teacher’s chair, in

⁴⁵⁴ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Sept. 26, 1844 and Oct. 7, 1844, Lieber Papers, HEH; Lieber, “A Visit to Europe,” 73.

prison and in freedom...in his native land and in his wedded country.” He declared himself still for liberty “in spite of all the reverses and errors of our race, political justice, the life of civil freedom – liberty, not as a pleasing or even noble object to be pursued by classes freed from the oppressive demands of material existence, but as an element of essential civilization.” In true German and Southern fashion, however, he spoke for the liberty of the Saxon race, but believed that the working-classes, both slave and free, required paternalistic care, but not freedom.⁴⁵⁵

II. Lieber’s Paternalism and Latent Racism

A. Why Lieber liked and disliked the South

Lieber’s bold expressions of disgust with Southern slavery in journal entries and letters to Northern friends during his twenty-one years in Columbia, South Carolina have convinced some historians that he was an abolitionist or at least antislavery. Lieber’s biographer Friedel contends that, because Lieber was denied liberty in Prussia as a young man, he felt disgust toward Southern slavery. Only respect for American and state law held Lieber back from abolitionism, Friedel argues. Fox-Genovese and Genovese appear to adopt the opinion that Lieber was antislavery, as well. While believing him against slavery, they still acknowledge a few similarities between him and other proslavery thinkers: “The sight of poor Alsatian peasant women plowing appalled the antislavery Francis Lieber.” Fox-Genovese and Genovese further state, “The antislavery Francis Lieber, who returned north from South Carolina in the 1850s and joined the Republican Party, judged slaves to be generally well treated, drawing a rebuke from his friend Charles Sumner.” Although the Genoveses do not develop the idea any further, their

⁴⁵⁵ Lieber, “The Ancient and the Modern Teacher of Politics, An Introductory Discourse to a Course of Lectures on the State. Delivered October 10, 1859, in the Law School of Columbia College,” in *Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, vol. 1.

statement supports this dissertation's claim that Lieber believed slaves to be well treated, better than all the peasants he observed in his travels and residencies in Europe.⁴⁵⁶

Historian Peter W. Becker also holds this view. In his essay "Lieber's Place in History," he states that "Lieber felt isolated in the South" and that "[h]is views on slavery, even though he could not express them for fear of losing his employment, especially separated him from his southern neighbors." His slave ownership was, according to Becker, a mere "acquiesce[nce] to local custom." This case study, however, contests that, due to Lieber's Prussian upbringing and European experiences, he was a slaveholder at heart.⁴⁵⁷

Lieber's actions belie his words. For example, his oft-expressed desire to escape the South was not prompted by a desire to flee the daily injustices of slavery. One reason he wished to depart stemmed from his latent racism, evidence of which is scattered throughout his letters and journals. In writing of his desire to leave "Negretia," he desired an escape from what he deemed to be the inferior Africans that inhabited Columbia in large numbers. In addition, Lieber desired a professorship elsewhere because Southern

⁴⁵⁶ Frank Friedel, "Francis Lieber, Charles Sumner, and Slavery," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Feb. 1943), 75-93; Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 20, 136, 155. They acknowledge his antislavery tendencies but also mention his similarities to Southerners: "The antislavery Lieber...joined proslavery theorists in denouncing the labor theory of value, maintaining that commodities contained no inherent value, only value in exchange." This view of political economy places Lieber in a similar camp to Cooper.

⁴⁵⁷ The collection of fifteen essays entitled *Francis Lieber and the Culture of the Mind*, resulting from the University of South Carolina's Bicentennial Symposium in 2001, cover diverse aspects of Lieber's life, such as his fascination with language, his development of General Orders No. 100 (the code he authored for army conduct), and his thought in the areas of moral philosophy and political science. Stuart Davis' contribution, "Observations Concerning African-American English in the Writings of Francis Lieber," presents Lieber's linguistic study of blacks' speech patterns rather than a discussion of Lieber's personal interactions with slaves. In Michael O'Brien's contribution to the collection, "The Stranger in the South," which is primarily a discussion of Lieber's detachment from the South, he notes that, as concerned "the moral problem of slavery," Lieber "was deeply compromised, being both antislavery and a slaveholder." Peter W. Becker, "Lieber's Place in History"; Stuart Davis, "Observations Concerning African-American English in the Writings of Francis Lieber"; and Michael O'Brien, "The Stranger in the South," in Mack and Lesesne, eds, *Francis Lieber and the Culture of the Mind*, 3, 12-13, 17, 33-35, 86-100.

libraries and universities stood far below Northern advancements. “Pray write me about what you pick up in regard to science +c, for we live in an absolute desert here,” Lieber wrote his close friend Charles Sumner. “Surely, forever I would not like so; I would rather go to Alabama and become a planter [and] make a competency in five years.” Since becoming a planter would mean a much closer embrace of slavery, Lieber revealed here a mind not averse to using the peculiar institution for his own ends.⁴⁵⁸

Although Lieber made close friends in Columbia who were members of the social elite, he preferred his Northern friends, many of whom were exceptional luminaries that are still respected today, including Charles Sumner, Henry Longfellow, Samuel Gridley Howe, and Julia Ward Howe. In a letter to Sumner in the 1830s, Lieber dreamed about leaving South Carolina for a position at Harvard, gloating that he would be “among my best American friends and in vastly the most important seminary of knowledge [of] this whole country.” He admitted, nonetheless, “I have always been treated with kindness and liberality [in] the South.” Despite Southern good will, however, “[I] cannot but consider [my]self in a degree exiled from the literary circle.” Daniel Hollis, in his SCC history, remarks, “Columbia society was polite, gentlemanly, and charming, but not scholarly. Its talk was concerned with crops, politics, whiskey, and women, and not devoted to discussions of abstruse intellectual subjects. Lieber felt submerged, baffled, and remote from active and progressive intellectual life.” Colyer Meriwether wrote in the 1880s that Lieber “speaks of the kindness of the Prestons, Notts, Hamptons, LaBordes, and others. But they were not interested in the deep questions that he loved to discuss.”⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ Lieber to Sumner, June 30, 1846, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁵⁹ Lieber to Charles Sumner, Oct. 27, 1835, May 24, 1837; Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Sept. 16, 1837, Lieber Papers, HEH; Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 181; Meriwether, *History of Higher Education*, 179.

In all, Lieber desired a new situation because he felt the South was not fine enough for him. When Alexis de Tocqueville offered Lieber a position as a journal correspondent in 1844, Lieber doubted its feasibility: “I donot [sic] know by any means yet whether I shall be able to do myself justice as a correspondent of a European paper, in that hole down there, nor whether, after some time you...would like my epistles from Negretia.” In an 1839 letter to his wife, Lieber included a whimsical poem illustrating his feeling of degradation: “Am I not in the land Where the negro fumes, and the butter is rancid, Where the white man swaggers, who should ever have fancied That of all I am destined to live in the South Where the soul finds no food...” In a journal entry, he explained further: “People who live in intellectual and social communion do not know how much they owe as to incitement, the starting of ideas, and their regulation and modification, to that very communion. The mere seeing a few persons who reflect and think, - it need not be in the same line, - and who are befriended with us, stirs, animates, vivifies. The mind is sharpened again as a razor on a strap. Now, I have not one...from whom I could derive stirring knowledge in my sphere.” And again, he wrote, “I live at the South, it is true, but with respect to culture and intellectual life, and all a man requires who takes part in the stirring movements of our time, I might as well be in Siberia.”⁴⁶⁰

Although he did not wish to return to Europe due to the oppressive governments there, Lieber missed European culture while in the South. Writing of his horseback rides in South Carolina in 1839, Lieber stated that these excursions were “really delightful, but you miss here always life, life. You meet no one to talk to, except perhaps an old negro...the self-same houses of the whites, and the negros; no various classes; I miss

⁴⁶⁰ Lieber to Alexis de Tocqueville, Hamburg, Nov. 26, 1844, and Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Oct. 31, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL; Lieber, Diary, Nov. 20, 1839, and Lieber to Mittermaier, May 13, 1841, in *Life and Letters*, 141, 151.

especially villages, fine European taverns, +c, to mark the distance.” In addition to disliking the ever-present black population, Lieber did not enjoy the remote countryside of the South and the small-town feel of Columbia, preferring cosmopolitan cities like Berlin, London, Philadelphia, and Boston.⁴⁶¹

B. Lieber’s Friends in the South

Despite the miserable and perhaps intentionally dramatic lines in Lieber’s letters, designed to make his Northern friends deeply pity him in his Southern exile and find him a job in their culturally superior region, the professor had many elite friends in Columbia and shared many commonalities with them, such as a belief in slavery. For example, he labeled much of his Southern conversation “fine,” and sometimes even spoke well of Southern society in letters to Northern friends. Writing to Sumner just after the move to Columbia in 1835, he stated, “The people seem to be fine, open hearted; in fact I have become acquainted with some, who make a most excellent impression.” Soon after the Liebers moved to Columbia, Governor George McDuffie invited Lieber and his family to visit him for a week at his plantation. Lieber quickly formed friendships with faculty members. Literature professor Junius Nott and his family took the Liebers into their home for two weeks because the new professor’s house was not ready. Evidently, Lieber also formed a friendship with Wade Hampton, legendary plantation owner and politician, and his family, because when the Liebers’ furniture did not arrive, “Mrs. Hampton lent us beds.” Soon afterward, Lieber “rode thirty-five miles on a deer hunt” with the family, and

⁴⁶¹ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Dec. 7, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL. O’Brien in *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 73-76, 78, briefly acknowledges that Lieber displayed racial prejudice and states that “Indeed, part of his hatred of slavery was that it condemned him to live among Africans.” While he confirms Lieber’s similarities to the slaveholders around him, he leaves the idea there and does not follow it to a conclusion. Interestingly, the Southern historian believes that Lieber’s first choice of location would have been Europe, particularly Prussia. Lieber disproved this, however, stating that, when the King of Prussia invited him to return to his homeland, and even offered him a position, the professor declined due to the anti-republican nature of the state.

became “an intimate” of the prominent Wade Hampton. Lieber also shared a long-term friendship with James Henry Hammond, notorious slave abuser, and several of their letters are extant. One recorded Lieber’s gift to Hammond of an “iron copy of a gold medal” from Berlin, Lieber’s birthplace. Lieber and the governor corresponded long after Lieber left South Carolina and moved to New York. The professor also corresponded with his former student, Wade Hampton III, later South Carolina governor and United States senator, who many years after their connection sent a gift of antlers to his former professor in New York City.⁴⁶²

On moving to Columbia in 1835, Lieber renewed a friendship with Calhoun he had begun on an earlier trip to Washington two years earlier. “Talk with Calhoun...Calhoun is mind, through and through,” Lieber wrote in his journal after a dinner party. Lieber also corresponded with Hugh Swinton Legaré, pro-slavery apologist, and wrote pieces for the *Southern Review*, which Legaré founded. “Dined at Nott’s with Legaré...Fine talk,” Lieber jotted in his journal. At a dinner Robert Y. Hayne, states’ rights politician, gave in Lieber’s honor, the professor met James Petigru and admired him tremendously; they remained long-term friends.⁴⁶³

Lieber’s compatibility with elite slaveholders was in character with his German roots. Interestingly, Hartmut Keil states that the majority of Germans disagreed with American slavery, while this chapter argues that Lieber’s upbringing in Germany

⁴⁶² Lieber to Sumner, Oct. 27, 1835, Lieber Papers, HEH; Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 128, 132; Lieber to J.H. Hammond, Columbia, 1843, in *Francis Lieber’s Influence on American Thought and Some of His Unpublished Letters*, Charles Finney, ed. (Philadelphia: International Print Company, 1918), 68; see pages 71-78 for further correspondence. Lieber to Wade Hampton, Sept. 5, 1858, *Life and Letters*, 300. In Jamie Diane Wilson, “Evil Communications Corrupt Good Morals,” *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association*, 2014, I argued that Lieber became proslavery as a result of the seductive atmosphere of Columbia. While I now maintain that Lieber’s proslavery beliefs stemmed from his European experiences, his friendships with eminent Columbians nonetheless give a great deal of insight into his feelings about slavery and Southern society.

⁴⁶³ Lieber, 1836 and 1837 Journal, *Life and Letters*, 113-114, 123.

predisposed him to accept slavery. Keil declares that Lieber's study of Southern slaves "grew out of Lieber's recognition of the irreconcilable contradictions between his convictions and his accommodation to southern society and life while he and his family lived in Columbia." This chapter, however, posits the conclusion that Lieber's convictions and accommodation to southern society were more unified than others have supposed.⁴⁶⁴

Shearer Davis Bowman's findings corroborate this idea. He asserts that many elite German lords sympathized with Southern slavery because of its similarities to Prussian serfdom. For example, many proslavery Germans settled in Texas in the 1830s and 1840s. One settler even wrote that "my German laborer," named Franz, and his newly purchased slave, Toms, labored together to keep his new Texas farm afloat. Both societies wrote literature in defense of their two similar systems: "The writings of intellectual apologists for the two elites often displayed less interest in the plantation or *Rittergut's* success as an agricultural business than in its success at embodying the ideal of a Christian and patriarchal community, one where the survival of hierarchical and deferential social relations allegedly meant less exploitation and more humanity than could exist in the depersonalized and competitive world of urban commerce and industry." Bowman compares the proslavery arguments of Calhoun and Hammond, respected friends of Lieber's, to Prussian conservative arguments, such as that of "Brandenburg Baron Karl Adolph Alexander von Hertefeld [who] condemned 'the modern masterless slavery'" and wished to protect "the 'feudalization of landed

⁴⁶⁴ Keil, "Francis Lieber's Attitudes on Race, Slavery, and Abolition," 16-19. Keil puts forward a similar argument here to that in his 2011 essay "'That Species of Property': Francis Lieber's Encounter with Slavery and Race" in *Paths Crossing: Essays in German-American Studies in German Life and Civilization*, Cora Kluge, ed., Vol. 54, 2011.

property.’” A German immigrant in Texas, writing back home, said that “the ‘Negroes have it better here than the entire servant class with you [because he or she] is capital to the owner. The latter doesn’t let it deteriorate nor does he strike it dead if he himself wants to prosper.’”⁴⁶⁵

In addition to purchasing slaves, Lieber demonstrated change through his wholehearted approval and justification of his new slave-owning friends. He even claimed that several of them had antislavery beliefs. Even though Preston (see chapter four) and SCC professor Junius Nott were certainly a part of the proslavery culture, Lieber wrote in his journal in 1835, “Preston the Senator shares my views on slavery, so does Professor Nott.” After Nott’s tragic death in 1837, Lieber wrote Sumner, “I stood nearer to Nott than any other professor, that with him alone I had what began to approach to intimacy. He had been long in Europe, he was a gentleman, he had read much – we could chat with each other.” The professor also believed he had a great deal in common with Petigru in slavery thought. Although Petigru, a successful attorney, worked to secure legal justice for South Carolina’s free blacks against the opposition of the white majority, he felt satisfied with the institution of slavery and owned both plantation and house slaves. Lieber felt that Preston, Nott, Petigru, and others shared his “antislavery” beliefs because he himself was not antislavery; therefore, he and other Southern proslavery individuals were in accord with each other. He and the others acknowledged flaws in the institution when conversing together, but did not, in reality, want it to end.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 23-24, 40-41. 174-175.

⁴⁶⁶ Lieber, 1835 and 1837 Journals, *Life and Letters*, 108, 124; Lieber to Sumner, Oct. 13, 1837, Lieber Papers, HEH; James Petigru, *Life, Letters, and Speeches of James Louis Petigru* (Washington, DC: W.H. Lowdermilk and Company, 1920.) 349-352. On page 83 of *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, O’Brien gives a full list of Lieber’s Southern correspondents, naming Stephen Elliott, Beverley Tucker, George Frederick Holmes, Lawrence Keitt, Richard Henry Wilde, James Warley Miles, J.D.B. DeBow, Hugh Legaré,

While living in Columbia, Lieber shared enduring friendships with other well-known proslavery individuals. In one missive, he considered studying law and passing the bar, stating that “Judge Harper, here, urges me to do it.” William Harper was a renowned proslavery theorist. The proslavery, pro-nullification governor of South Carolina, James Hamilton, had Lieber to his grand plantation near Charleston, wrote him friendly letters, and sometimes visited with him in Columbia. “I had a long, fine, hearty chat with Gov. Hamilton,” Lieber wrote. “He is a royal fellow.” In a letter to Samuel Ruggles, Lieber lamented in 1855, “I have met with a serious loss. The only man here, with whom I partially sympathized, David M’Cord, is gone. He was suddenly taken ill, and after lingering a few days, he died...Formerly a lawyer, he had become a planter, was ever reading though he was not learned, was a thorough free trader and widely read economist, had an infinite fund of fun and felt happy under my roof.” In 1839, he reported to Matilda in a letter, “Our valued and esteemed friend Rob. Y. Hayne is dead...in the midst of a most active, useful career, and so esteemed by his whole state!” This “useful career” involved fighting for the right of states to continue the institution of slavery, which Lieber sometimes claimed in personal – but never public – writings to dislike.⁴⁶⁷

Although he respected secessionist Robert Y. Hayne, Lieber was constant in his Unionist beliefs against secession, as revealed in both his personal and public writings, greatly fearing the outcome for not only the United States, but also mankind as a whole. Even so, he identified with Carolina in one of his fiercest complaints about secession.

Calhoun, and William Henry Trescot. He also states that Lieber “had a following among the many students that twenty years of teaching had brought him.”

⁴⁶⁷ Lieber to Sumner, May 24, 1837, and Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Philadelphia, Aug. 3, 1837, Lieber Papers, HEH; Lieber to Ruggles, Columbia, May 1855, and Lieber to Matilda, Oct. 31, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL.

After describing the current situation, he declared his joy in the fact that the tide had turned away from secession in the state (or at least, so he thought.) “Deum Laudamus [Praise God] – I sing it *as Carolinian* [italics mine], as American, as man, as historian,” he shared with his confidante Hillard.⁴⁶⁸

Lieber’s Carolinian identity, then, ran deep, contrary to Hartmut Keil’s findings. Although admitting some of Lieber’s proslavery tendencies, Keil does not label Lieber as completely proslavery, stating that “Living in the slave South as an opponent of the institution of slavery meant that he was painfully aware of its inhumanity.” He further argues that “[w]hen [Lieber] could no longer bear the contradictions while living in the South, he chose to escape to the North. Obviously he experienced this decision as a personal and moral liberation.” This chapter contends, contrarily, that Lieber left the South because he did not receive the SCC presidency.⁴⁶⁹

When Lieber left the college in 1856, twenty-one years after his arrival, it was not motivated by his alleged “dislike” for slavery, nor even due to his sincere Unionist beliefs. Instead, Lieber suddenly resigned because his bid for the college presidency had been refused in favor of a vastly inferior candidate. Unwilling to swallow his pride, Lieber rashly resigned his professorship before securing a new position. A few years later, when news of Lieber’s sudden transformation into a Republican abolitionist reached the ears of his former friends and associates in Columbia, they expressed astonishment. In 1860, the SCC Euphradian Society recorded in their meeting minutes that Lieber had evinced a “ready and zealous espousal of our political principles,” praised Calhoun, and had even gone so far as to become a member of the Southern Rights

⁴⁶⁸ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Oct. 18, 1851, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁶⁹ Hartmut Keil, “That Species of Property,” 55-59.

Association in 1851. (See chapter six for further discussion of the SCC students' opinion of Lieber's beliefs.)⁴⁷⁰

Oscar, the oldest of Lieber's three sons, did not follow him to the North. He remained in Columbia as a staunch Southerner and Confederate that volunteered and died in the Civil War. He explained that his father had changed after leaving the South. Due to their political differences, Oscar and his father were not speaking at the time, so the son addressed the letter to his mother. "I could not forget the constant contemptuous remarks on the South, which made my first visit to you so painful, nor the fact that more recently a polite silence on such topics on fathers part was spoken of as an imprisonment in his own house." Oscar further expressed his surprise: "[N]or did I for a moment suppose that father had been converted to ultra abolitionism" just because he had joined the Republican Party. This indicates that Oscar did not believe his father to be an abolitionist before his 1857 move to the North; a change had occurred. Lieber's return to denunciations of slavery and the South began, interestingly enough, only after he was denied the presidency of SCC. Bitterness and hurt pride encouraged Lieber to turn against the society that had rejected his superior talents; the need of a new position in the North caused him to employ the expediency of reaching out to his Northern friends and declaring himself completely against the slave institution they hated. In addition, with the sectional controversy growing still hotter in 1856, as an open Unionist, Lieber needed to escape the secession-contemplating South.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Lieber to [Gov] Adams, Dec. 5, 1855, Lieber Papers, SCL, contains Lieber's brief resignation from the professorship. On page 254, Friedel in *Nineteenth-Century Liberal* briefly affirms Lieber's part in drawing up the Southern Rights Association resolutions for the SCC students in 1851.

⁴⁷¹ Oscar Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Forlorn Hope, Nov. 3, 1860, Lieber Papers, SCL. Lieber was appointed to a position as professor at New York City's Columbia College (now University) in 1857.

C. Lieber's Racism

Lieber evinced more blatant racism than shown by Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston, probably resulting from his typical German belief in Saxon superiority. In a letter to Sumner and Hillard in 1842, Lieber discussed certain racist sentiments: "Sumner says [the Right Honorable Macaulay] is going to publish poems on slavery. I had long thought that an American poet might make a fine Collection, called, perhaps, Songs to my country, on many vital and peculiarly American topics, and Slavery would be one of them." The professor, however, did not approve of a pro-abolitionist poetry saga that depicted what were, to him, unattractive black bodies: "But if...they consist of apotheoses of the negro [such as] the title page of one of your publications there, consisting of a rose out of which leaped a black cupid with wooly hair and puffed lips (to remind one of all things of the [way the] negros smell!)" Lieber loathed above all what he often called the "beetle smell of the negroes." He continued, "[I]f the author came out as a mere abolitionist bard, I fear his songs will be bound up in one volume with the Temperance odes and hymns and put away in the same shelf." Lieber disdained what he referred to as "radical" movements like women's rights, temperance, and abolitionism, much as did Thornwell.⁴⁷²

In his journals and letters, Lieber made no secret of his opinion concerning blacks' appearance. In his definition of the Americanism "yellow," he wrote: "Means here in the South, if applied to human beings, coloured, mullatto [sic]. Still it is perhaps sometimes used to designate rather the lighter mulatto." He mused that "the expression is

⁴⁷² Lieber to Hillard and Sumner, Columbia, Dec. 17, 1842, Lieber Papers, HEH. Although Friedel believes that Lieber thought blacks fairly similar to whites "physically and mentally," a conclusion which Lieber's letters, slavery notebook, and slavery scrapbook deny, he does, however, state that "race amalgamation" was "an idea repugnant to Lieber's Saxon mind." Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 235, 239. This chapter also cites Lieber's Northern European pride as a central reason for his prejudice against blacks.

evidently derived from that peculiar yellow – and very disagreeable – colour, which some light mulattos, especially females, have.”⁴⁷³

Unlike Thornwell, for example, who “was not ashamed to call [the black man] our brother,” Lieber firmly believed in polygenesis, the idea that the different “races” originated from different sources. “There is a contest brewing here about the unity or diversity of our race,” he explained to Hillard in 1850. “I confess to you I cannot see how a negro, with his anatomical and physiological differences, ever can have grown out of a white man, or vice versa.” Even after Lieber’s abolitionist Republican metamorphosis, he held to white racial superiority: “I believe that the white race will eventually absorb and sweep away all others, at least in this country,” he predicted after the Civil War. In a letter to James A. Garfield in 1870, written near the end of his life, Lieber fumed in exasperation, “As if we had not negroes and Catholics enough already!”⁴⁷⁴

D. Lieber’s Paternalism and Defense of Slaveholders

Lieber’s racist feelings affected his behavior as a slaveholder. In Hartmut Keil’s essay, “‘That Species of Property’: Francis Lieber’s Encounter with Slavery and Race,” he explores Lieber’s many contradictions in order to resolve his true identity. Though Keil argues that Lieber is a racist individual with some proslavery tendencies, he makes no correlation to the fact that Lieber’s European experiences predisposed him to support slavery. In the essay, he discusses many of Lieber’s slave descriptions, making a case for Lieber’s paternalism and racism. “Lieber did more than just assenting to a token conformism,” Keil states; “He continued to look out for slaves after his first purchase in 1836, and indeed bought several more during succeeding years, accepting and applying

⁴⁷³ Lieber, “Notanda Americana,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁷⁴ Lieber to Hillard, Apr. 1850; Lieber to Geheim-Rath Bluntschli, NY, Apr. 18, 1868; and Lieber to James A. Garfield, Dec. 14, 1870, in *Life and Letters*, 245, 385, 405.

typical slave owners' standards in the process." While Keil demonstrates the positive side of Lieber's paternalism, this chapter reveals the questionable side of his slave treatment.⁴⁷⁵

The Southern transplant clearly stated his belief in paternalism: the concept that slaves were, on the whole, well-cared for in the South, to the point of being, in his opinion, an actual burden to masters in many cases. These were the same thoughts he shared in conversation with the Russian plantation mistress he met in Germany. Labeling blacks as both a lower class and an inferior race, Lieber believed they would benefit from the protection of white elites. He mused in his slavery notebook: "Any writer on Slavery has to treat it thoroughly [sic] in the point of view of a pauper-system." He believed this to be the accurate sense, because proslavery authors "defend it strongly perhaps mainly on this ground," and this was "the only ground on which, with decency, [slavery] can be made [to] appear plausible." This statement reveals his own proslavery thinking, coupled with his desire for the Southern working class to be properly maintained. His close observations of paupers in France, Britain, Germany, Italy, and Greece convinced Lieber that it was vital for a pauper maintenance system to be in place.⁴⁷⁶

Lieber even championed paternalism in one of his published speeches. "The Character of a Gentleman," addressed to the Miami University, Ohio, class of 1846, was "printed and widely distributed," and a second edition followed the next year. It is probable that SCC students read the address in pamphlet form. "Let me barely allude to the duties of the gentleman in those countries in which slavery still exists," Lieber stated, only thinly veiling his allusion to the South. "Plato says, genuine humanity and probity

⁴⁷⁵ Keil, "That Species of Property": Francis Lieber's Encounter with Slavery and Race," 55-59.

⁴⁷⁶ Lieber, "Slavery Notebook," Lieber Papers, HEH.

were brought to the test, by the behavior of a man to slaves, whom he may wrong with impunity. He speaks like a gentleman.” Lieber embraced the Southern concept that the true gentleman-master treated his slaves paternalistically. “Although [Plato’s] golden rule applies to all whom we may offend or grieve with impunity, and the fair and noble use of any power we may possess, is one of the truest tests of a gentleman, yet it is natural that Plato should have made the treatment of the slave the peculiar test, because slavery gives the greatest power.” Speaking through the voice of a Roman orator, whose bust appeared in his SCC lecture room with those of more recent slaveholders, Lieber counseled the young men, “Cicero says we should use slaves no otherwise than we do our day laborers.”⁴⁷⁷

Paternalism was not an unusual attitude for an old-fashioned German elite to hold. According to Bowman, “the Southern proslavery or Old Prussian argument that the relationship between the owners of large estates and their laboring dependents constituted essentially a familial, paternal interaction between stern but beneficent fathers on the one hand and immature but loyal children on the other [was] ‘the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships’ in Southern or East Elbian society.” It is interesting to note that Lieber stood firmly for patriarchy as related to men and women. Although he had many female friends and treated his wife as an intelligent companion, he was strongly against women’s rights and left his wife behind at home during most summers while he escaped to the cooler North, though she did not enjoy Columbia’s summers. In Prussia as well as South Carolina, “[t]he nature of those obligations and rights seems to

⁴⁷⁷ Lieber, “The Character of the Gentleman,” in *Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, 271.

derive from the ideal-typical model of a family within which the father provides sustenance and protection in return for childlike (or wifely) obedience and loyalty.”⁴⁷⁸

An unpublished book review Lieber authored further demonstrated his approval of serfdom and slavery. He evinced significant disdain for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the famous abolitionist work. In a letter to Hillard in 1853 soon after its publication, he criticized Sumner for calling Harriet Beecher Stowe a “Joan of Arc! Truly, this is Sophomoric.” He wrote, “I consider Mrs Stowe’s journey in England [as] internationally indecorous.” Lieber believed that the best seller hurt the ideal of American liberty and tarnished its example in Europe, because nations like Britain, Germany, and France could cite the negatives present in the book as an excuse for continuing their anti-republican governments. On the South’s behalf, he added, “Mrs Stowe was bound I think to give more opposite facts too, to make the picture truthful – the immense sacrifices which this system requires and the enormous tax it is all the time upon the good (for instance the wasteful number of house servants, both in the ‘yard’ and whom people will not send to the field or sell, and thousand other things.)” This opinion derived from Lieber’s time in Europe, where lords reported the same difficulties with serfs as Southerners did with slaves.⁴⁷⁹

In one of Lieber’s seemingly conflicted moments in 1849, as a sort of cathartic exercise, he wrote five letters to Calhoun citing the evils of slavery under the pen name “Tranquillus,” but never mailed them. In the first and fifth letters, he asked Calhoun and South Carolina to consider modifications of slavery to create a more humane system that bore close similarities to European serfdom. Interestingly, the professor revered Calhoun

⁴⁷⁸ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 86, 163.

⁴⁷⁹ Lieber, “Uncle Tom,” 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

before his SCC students as a sterling example for them to emulate. Lieber emphasized that slavery, as it stood, was, in contrast, a very great burden on the paternalistic slaveholder. Due to this fact, Lieber argued, some Southerners might want “to rid themselves of the alp of slavery, which brings its heavy chains for the master as for the servant.” If Lieber could speak of the “chains” being just as difficult for the master (who was generally considered to be on the profitable side of the situation) as they were for the slave, he had to believe that slavery was beneficial or at least an extremely mild institution.⁴⁸⁰

Based on his understanding of German serfdom, Lieber then suggested that “meliorations which in other countries are enjoyed by the slave” would be quite appropriate. Complimenting the South, he wrote, “I am thoroughly [sic] acquainted with the South; many affectionate ties unite me individually to her.” This statement belied his erstwhile expressions of disgust with the region. He then blamed Northern agitators for the fact that slavery’s problematic issues had not been updated sooner: “[O]ften has it been said that slavery would long have assumed a very different aspect had not the abolitionist zealots called forth an opposing spirit.” As a result, proslavery apologists had insisted that slavery remain just as it was, with no changes whatsoever. This statement

⁴⁸⁰ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Oct. 28, 1852 and [May/June 1853]; Lieber, “Uncle Tom,” 1853; and Tranquillus, Fifth Unposted Letter to Calhoun, Lieber Papers, HEH. Friedel, in *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 235, briefly supports the idea that Lieber desired improvements within the institution in the direction of Continental serfdom. He mentions in reference to Lieber’s study of Northern blacks, compiled when the German was a resident of Boston, that Lieber advocated “a gradual amelioration of the plight of the Negro until he had achieved the status of serfdom.” He also remarks, “In 1846, Lieber seriously contemplated issuing an appeal to Calhoun. It would urge him to head a movement to modify the Southern slaveholding system...by introducing a system of serfdom...through which industrious slaves could gradually win certain rights and privileges.” Although Friedel does not develop the idea further, this chapter argues that Lieber advocated serfdom due to his German upbringing and, while in Europe, stated that he wished slavery to imitate serfdom in certain respects.

resembled Cooper's assertion that the fear of slave revolt due to abolitionist agitation had prevented masters from a complete expression of paternalism.⁴⁸¹

Under the guise of critique, Lieber continued to expose his proslavery feelings. "Is the history of united Europe from the times of barbarian darkness to the present age, a blank that offers no lesson?" the cosmopolitan traveler interrogated. "So sure as knowledge, freedom, fairness...advance, spread and take deeper root, so sure[ly] does slavery change into serfdom," he wrote. "You are aware," he advised his absent audience, "that your state laws are more stringent and more absolute than those of any other country." Once again he gave his approval of most Southern slaveholders: "The kindly feeling which pervades the South in a very great degree, frequently counteracts the uncompromising spirit of these laws." Strongly disapproving of the fact that slaves' marriages could not be legal, while serfs' marriages were, he suggested changing that aspect. "In some foreign countries," he wrote, thinking of Europe, "the marriages of the slaves cannot be torn asunder." In Turkish, Spanish, and Greek history, Lieber further pontificated, a magistrate was appointed for the sole responsibility of listening to and rectifying slaves' grievances.⁴⁸²

Lieber wished for property laws, in addition to marriage laws, to be ameliorated. Declaring that the master's property was in the slave's labor and not in his body, he felt that a slave should be allowed to possess some small property of his own. In fact, Lieber allowed his slave Betsy to do a little side work and keep the money for her own personal

⁴⁸¹ Tranquillus, First and Fifth Unposted Letters to Calhoun, 1849, HEH.

⁴⁸² Tranquillus, Fifth Unposted Letter to Calhoun, HEH. In the letter series, Lieber advocated for the extremely gradual change of slaves into free individuals. This sort of wish is not atypical for the conflicted Lieber, but the fact that freedom was to come as a long term process, "slavery to serfdom, serfdom to boorship, boorship to peasantry, and peasantry to free farmers and artisans" indicates an extremely mild antislavery streak. Examining his attitudes as a whole, the author contends that Lieber was, at heart, a proslavery man.

use. Serfs received small quantities of land, to which they were bound, and Lieber argued for slaves to receive the same: “In other countries land is allowed to the slave after a faithful service of a number of fixed years.” He also advocated a promotion system for what masters deemed well-behaved slaves: “[I]n many countries the law prescribes certain essential rewards and elevations in the scale of society for fidelity and good conduct.” The German-American believed that the “patriarchal spirit,” currently dimmed by oppressive laws, would shine far brighter to the benefit of all if these serfdom suggestions were taken on board. However, the letters remained in his private papers, never influencing Calhoun or South Carolina.⁴⁸³

On other occasions, Lieber not only repeated his approval of paternalistic slavery for the good of the enslaved, but went so far as to voice this opinion in the North to his abolitionist friend Sumner. In a letter to his perennial confidante Hillard in 1850, Lieber reported, “I said at dinner at the [Longfellows] that as to physical treatment the slaves were upon the whole well off in the South, and that the general feeling of humanity toward the blacks in the South makes slavery additionally burthensome to the master, in asmuch [sic] as in most cases the owner has very little control over house slaves.” In a later letter to his friend Dorothea Dix, Lieber stated that he and Matilda further “maintained that the negroes, upon the whole, were physically well treated on the plantations, and better than in the West Indies.”⁴⁸⁴

In 1851, Lieber, in fact, clearly defended the right of Southerners to own slaves in a letter to Hillard: “I...really think that if people must have slaves it is their affair to keep them; and, what is worth remarking, you will never see a [Southern] man of any

⁴⁸³ Tranquillus, Fifth Unposted Letter to Calhoun, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁸⁴ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Apr. 6, 1850, Lieber Papers, HEH; Lieber to “A Friend” [Dorothea Dix], NY, Apr. 18, 1858, *Life and Letters*, 207.

reputation hurting blacks in free [Northern] territory. Calhoun had a runaway slave in the North, who used to write to him, but he never moved a finger about him,” he defended the celebrated Southerner. “I know a similar case with Mr. Clay’s family, and several others. But on the other side,” he hotly critiqued, “Sumner and his friends...can only do mischief.” In opposition to abolitionists, he identified himself with Southern slaveholders: “To be sure, they would charge us with trimming and call us lukewarm expediency men; but I know I am not – I know that I love freedom as much as any one of them and a great deal more than most of them.” His use of “us” and “them” made his proslavery self-identification quite manifest.⁴⁸⁵

In an 1849 essay on California statehood, Lieber admitted the human nature of the slave, but asserted that the law would punish the master who killed him. Like Thornwell and Preston, he argued, “[T]he slave himself is not property but his labour is. Property involves the idea of a free disposal over the thing owned, or, as the ancient civilians expressed it, the exclusive right of use and abuse. We have seen that we possess no such right over the slave and have never claimed it,” he wrote, self-identifying with Southern slaveowners, a logical move since he, after all, was one himself. “We own the labour of the slave and this cannot be done without keeping the person in bondage.” He upheld the right of each new state to decide whether or not slavery would be legal. “Surely those, then, who found new governments have not only the right but are obliged to say whether this institution shall or shall not be embodied in the municipal law.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Apr. 28, 1851, Lieber Papers, HEH. In a letter to Sumner dated May 22, 1847, Lieber sided with the people of Columbia when Daniel Webster was rude and cold to them on his visit.

⁴⁸⁶ Lieber, “Is there any implied insult to the South in slavery being excluded from California,” [1849], Lieber Papers, HEH.

Writing to his wife Matilda in 1849, Lieber gave an example of why he believed slaves needed the care of a master. “Betsy told me that she had made clear of all expence [sic] in downright cash two dollars last week by cooking in the evenings. However [since] they seem to feast all their gains away, I do not see that she gets anything very good for it,” he explained. “They are a very improvident people[,] which is however quite natural as they always know themselves under care and guardianship, and in this manner people do not have to think and act for themselves rationally.”⁴⁸⁷

Lieber stood against slave abuse, such as whipping, as well as extreme psychological abuse. In an essay he wrote in 1853 critiquing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, he frowned upon the separation of families through sale: “I bought Croesa at the greatest inconvenience to myself, that she might not be carried off from her husband, Titus, by traders to the South.” He and Preston expressed indignation over “a fellow...who erected a pen, as it were, some few miles from Columbia, into which he put all the children he could pick up, for a southern market.” Although Lieber at times followed his own convenience as a slaveholder, raising slave children outdoors in pens and separating couples was outside of his concept of paternalism.⁴⁸⁸

Even though he disliked harsh punishment, Lieber still emphatically declared that most slaves did not endure physical abuse and that, in his opinion, abuse was not the worst problem within slavery. On the contrary, he believed that the injured “soul” of the rare elevated slave should be pitied. In the West Indies, islands that were former and present-day colonies of Britain and France, he viewed slaves there as “brutes” who did not possess the mixed Southern slave’s sensitivity: “There the slave is still a brute and all

⁴⁸⁷ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Columbia, Feb. 24, 1849, Lieber Papers, SCL.

⁴⁸⁸ Lieber, “Facts in Uncle Tom: A Review of Mrs. Stowe’s Book,” 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

the unspeakable misery which dwell in the soul of an elevated slave are unknown.” In a racist explanation of “soul” capacity, he stated, “[W]here the blacks are bona fide blacks there is no trouble and misery which exists where they have mingled with the white and...light slaves exist.” He did not avow that all Southern slaves possessed this level of elevation, but he pitied those who had sufficient intelligence and feeling to resent their bondage.⁴⁸⁹

Like Thornwell, Lieber rejoiced in laws that protected Southern slaves. “[T]he law provides for their rest on Sunday, for a sufficiency of food and cloth[e]s – in one word, the law ascribes rights and obligations to the slave – it declares him a person besides his being property,” he wrote in his fourth unsent letter to Calhoun. He cited the predecessors to these laws in the Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman slave codes. Lieber, for once at least, praised the Catholics for their slave code’s recognition of slave’s humanity, which “declares them immortal, called upon to be saved, and binds the master to have them baptized.”⁴⁹⁰

The ultimate test for Lieber’s belief in slavery lies in the fact that he bought, rented, and sold slaves himself during his twenty-one year residence in South Carolina. The professor wrote extensively about his slaves, providing a detailed picture of his interactions with them. Lieber treated them with paternalism, albeit a firmer brand than that of Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston, probably due to the examples set during his close acquaintance with the rigors of Prussian serfdom.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Lieber, “Slavery Scrapbook,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁹⁰ Tranquillus, Fourth Unposted Letter to Calhoun, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁹¹ Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 208. “After all, “[German ideologues]...would depict life on the plantation...in rosy colors of mutual obligation and reciprocal affection, usually obscuring or minimizing the intrinsic cruelty and oppression. In so doing they elevated social relations on the estates to a noncommercial, familial, even spiritual level of meaning and quality that pragmatic, non-speculative planters and Junkers sometimes found flattering or appealing.”

III. Lieber's Own Slaves

Lieber's European background better explains his attitudes towards slavery than does his move to South Carolina. Although Lieber found Columbia society quite attractive, this does not, by itself, explain his slaveholder's personality. Historian Paul Finkleman indicates that, while Lieber "still retained doubts about the viability and morality of slavery," this increasing comfort with the institution occurred due to his long residence in South Carolina. This, however, does not explain the fact that Lieber brought a slave with him to Columbia and purchased more almost immediately after settling in. Finkleman mentions that "Lieber was convinced that abolitionists – like Sumner – were harming the nation" through their indirect encouragement of secession. This chapter, on the contrary, based on Lieber's voluminous correspondence, presents the evidence and argues that Lieber's feelings about abolitionism were quite similar to those of proslavery ideologues Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston.⁴⁹²

Tellingly, even while he resided in the North, Lieber's household included a slave. Two of his wife's brothers lived in Puerto Rico, and the Liebers occasionally visited them there. While Lieber still resided in Boston, these relatives provided him a black slave called George on a long-term loan basis. The professor greatly extended his role as master as a resident in Columbia over the next twenty-one years.⁴⁹³

Lieber rented Little Tom in October 1835, the same month he moved to South Carolina. "To-day Tom, as we call him, entered our service," he wrote in his journal. "He is about fourteen years old, and we pay his master \$4.50 a month. The little boy brings

⁴⁹² Paul Finkleman, "Lieber, Slavery, and the Problem of Free Thought in Antebellum South Carolina"; *Francis Lieber and the Culture of the Mind*, 12-13, 17, 33-35, 86-100. Finkleman argues in certain parts of the essay that Lieber was against slavery while, in other sections, he states that Lieber "more than made his peace with slavery."

⁴⁹³ Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 118.

with him a blanket, which is all he ever had to sleep upon.” Feeling a responsibility, before bedtime “Matilda and Abby (the nurse) made a mattress and pillow for little Tom.” In 1836, despite his continuing denouncements of slave ownership, Lieber made his first outright purchase, with his friend David McCord’s assistance, of a mother and daughter, Betsy and Elsa. Lieber saw the two women and asked the slave dealer their price, but did not purchase at that time. Later that day, Betsy visited Lieber and requested that he buy her and her daughter so they could stay together. He was careful to obtain a doctor’s examination of the women and assurance of their health before making the weighty purchases. As recorded in his slavery notebook, Lieber bought the pair for \$1,150. Later, Lieber also acquired Tom and Henry in order to profit by renting out their labor.⁴⁹⁴

After purchasing Betsy and Elsa, Lieber wrote a paternalistic explanation in his journal: “There is a constant turnover with slaves, and they themselves by far prefer to be with their master than elsewhere. A good slave hates to be sold or hired out.” This proved ironic since he later purchased Isaac and Henry for the express purpose of hiring them out for extra cash. Lieber further cleared himself in his own estimation when he jotted into his journal, “It is no injustice to have slaves where slavery exists and emancipation does not happen. We [he and his wife Matilda] know we want to be good to them, and they will be treated as kindly as anywhere.” He explained, “[I]t is far better to own slaves than to hire them. They feel attached to the master, because they are entirely dependent upon him.” He stated his plan to improve their serving skills and hygiene habits, and his wife voiced her intention to instruct the female slaves. After all, he remarked in his notebook,

⁴⁹⁴ Lieber, Diary, Oct. 28-29, 1835, *Life and Letters*, 109-110; Lieber, “Slavery Notebook,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

the mother and daughter may have been separated if he had not purchased them. When Elsa died in 1841, Lieber grieved for her loss, writing that if heaven existed “she must have gone to a better state – This I hope.” In the same breath that he regretted her passing, he was quick to calculate and regret his monetary loss as well, which, with Elsa’s increase in value since the time of purchase, equaled \$1,000 (approximately \$26,800 in 2016.)⁴⁹⁵

Lieber made similar shopping trips for slaves during the segment of his travels between Columbia and the Mason-Dixon Line. On a trip to D.C. from Columbia in 1837, Lieber noted of Richmond, VA, “Negros are so low now that owners, who are not pressed – and the Virginia country people are not – will not sell. I leave however my order here, and shall also look about in Washington.” On arriving in the nation’s capital, Lieber wrote to his wife that he considered purchasing a specific slave: “I have seen a boy here, who from mere appearance pleases me exceedingly, about 14 or 15 years old, lively etc. But the [owner] a tavern keeper asks \$700; of course I would not give more than \$500, provided he pleases me upon further inquiry. For less, it is not well possible to get a boy.” On his return trip, passing through Fayetteville, NC, he reported to Matilda again: “I thought I would inquire for a servant here. There are none...”⁴⁹⁶

While visiting Charleston in 1851, Lieber sent yet another epistle to Matilda that demonstrated his view of slaves as merchandise. “Gantt was very friendly and gentlemanlike,” Lieber complimented the slave trader. “He did buy the servant, a man he says I think will suit you exactly – about 19 years – rather too young. He belonged to a

⁴⁹⁵ Lieber, “Slavery Notebook,” Lieber Papers, HEH. Portions of the document are in Old German script; English translations are from Keil, “Francis Lieber’s Attitudes on Race, Slavery, and Abolition.”

⁴⁹⁶ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Richmond, July 25, 1837; Washington, Sept. 8, 1837; and Fayetteville, Sept. 25, 1837, Lieber Papers, HEH.

Dr...of Beaufort district [w]ho has him now for wages for me. Gantt [the trader] acts as his master, until I arrive here.” Although Lieber had his doubts about the young man’s ability, he wrote, “The boy attended the Dr and horse, and...I think the boy will do very well...If the Dr [former master] will not keep him all the time until I want him, he will endeavor to get wages for him, and if he cannot, Gantt will take him into his own house. This is all very glib – don’t you think so?” Lieber worried about the slave trader’s honesty concerning the substantial impending investment. “Gantt says they thought my [pre]requisite and descriptions excellent, and he looked particularly for hair and teeth. The boy is not quite black, and looks very healthy and fine.” Lieber felt that slaves who had some white in their background had greater intelligence and were more attractive.⁴⁹⁷

Despite earlier declarations against it, Lieber sold slaves from time to time as well. “I made the sale to [SCC professor Maximilian] Laborde for \$725, which will please you,” he wrote Matilda. “To-day Mary leaves me, and I am alone with Betsy.” He continued the narrative: “Mary behaves admirably [before her sale] – ten thousand times better than I should. To-day, Washington’s birthday,” despite the celebrations other slaves enjoyed, “she has remained here sowing quite alone in the nursery where she always now sits or outside in the entry.” Lieber had written in his slavery notebook that hiring out, let alone selling, a slave stood contrary to good treatment. When presented with the opportunity to profit, however, he accepted the idea of sale, despite Mary’s obvious despondence. Later correspondence seems to indicate that Lieber may have relented and kept Mary, or the purchase arrangement may have fallen through, but the

⁴⁹⁷ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Charleston, SC, June 31 [sic], 1841, Lieber Papers, HEH.

situation still manifests his intention to sell her, and he did sell slaves during his years in Columbia.⁴⁹⁸

Lieber also considered selling slaves for what he deemed to be “bad behavior.” In a letter to Matilda, he discussed the unusual behavior of a Mrs. Livingston, who took a “very surprising liberty...in taking a servant [Lieber’s slave Isaac] from the labor his master has assigned him.” He also referred to “Isaac’s disobedience.” Lieber sent a message through his wife: “[Say that] you almost believe that Mr Lieber on his return will have no objection of parting with Isaac for what he had cost or there about to him.”⁴⁹⁹

When Lieber left South Carolina for New York, he sold at least one of his slaves (and, most likely, more.) His oldest son, Oscar, who still resided in Columbia, wrote: “How negroes have risen in price! What with some carpentering that Henry has added to the list of his accomplishments since you sold him, I am told that he would now fetch \$1700.”⁵⁰⁰

A. Prejudice and Frustration

Lieber’s terminology for slaves revealed his negative opinion of them. In a notebook of Americanisms he kept, he defined “servant” just as the other Southerners did: “Servant means here always a slave, and is preferred both by whites and coloured, to slave.” However, Lieber rarely called his slaves “servants,” while Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston generally referred to their slaves with the euphemistic but more respectful

⁴⁹⁸ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Feb. 21, 1844, and Feb. 22, 1844, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁴⁹⁹ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Boston, Aug. 13, 1848, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁰⁰ Oscar Lieber to Francis Lieber, Sept. 24, 1859, Lieber Papers, SCL.

term. Lieber, however, frequently used the term “negro,” which focused on what was, to his mind, their inferior racial background.⁵⁰¹

Often smiling at his slaves’ statements, Lieber was convinced that slaves’ intellect and habits were below the education and capacity of the white man. For example, the professor delineated blacks’ speech as primitive English, detailing numerous “negroisms” in his notebooks. Examples included “Our negros say ligions for religions and I have fulled the bottle instead of filled the bottle.” Lieber noticed his slave John’s misuse of words. “My son Norman told John the negro servant that he was writing to his brother Hamilton. Hamilton had always been a great favourite of John’s, and the latter replied, in my hearing, ‘I shall dictate to you a letter to Master Hamilton. Yes, a reg’lar fine tyrannical letter.’ The idea was a fine letter full of good feeling; his feelings swelled; the mind wanted to express it and caught hold of a big word.” On another occasion, Lieber expressed concern that the family slave, Henry, was corrupting his three sons’ language: “Have not our boys contracted fearful English from the negro boys? Is Henry not continually with them? I fear much.”⁵⁰²

When Lieber remained in Columbia on the occasion of his wife and sons’ trip to Germany in 1839, they corresponded extensively, often about his difficulties with their slaves. On one occasion, he declared Betsy stupid because she could not open a trunk. Discussing his loneliness, he reported that he had gone too long “without speaking to womankind at all, except for Betsy, who you will allow cannot possibly excite my imagination, [even] were you to change her black into the softest white of Grecian marble.” He used derogatory names for Betsy, such as “that woman,” “negro,” and

⁵⁰¹ Lieber, “Notanda Americana,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁰² Lieber, “Notanda Americana,” Lieber Papers, HEH; Lieber to Matilda Lieber, September 28, 1841, Lieber Papers, SCL.

“Madame Blackamoor,” ridiculed her accent, and referred to slaves as a whole as “these creatures.” Soon after this, he complained in another epistle that Betsy bothered him at least once a day while he was writing with a request to open the storeroom and told her he would no longer open it for her. The noise and frolic made by “darkies in the yard” amused him.⁵⁰³

Lieber continued to belittle his slaves’ behavior in his letters. “Betsy told me many things to write you, the chief ones are love, pickles, baby, health, and ketsup,” he chuckled to his wife. “She is a very good woman with some very bad manners. Her vanity I have fairly broken...I made [her] consult Twisses servant [Thomas Twiss was a SCC professor] respecting a certain point in baking and I have now the finest bread, every time, without fail.” Continuing his saga, he confided, “Her honesty positively astounds me sometimes. Henry appeared this moment in a new suit before me, with a black satin waistcoat. When I reproached his extravagance I was answered by his mother [presumably Betsy], Why master, it is now the fashion, all students wear them.” The professor thought it ridiculous for a mere slave to wear the fashionable attire of an elite college student.⁵⁰⁴

In common with many Southerners, such as Preston, Lieber believed slaves to be naturally lazy: “Negroes...call studying, when they stop in the midst of their work, as they frequently do, and dream or think.” In his slavery scrapbook, he remarked, “The servants are very slow – dirty of course – slovenly – forget everything.” As a young man in Greece, Lieber made much the same analysis of Greek peasants, who he believed did not merit a free government. The German professor also believed that blacks often failed

⁵⁰³ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Oct. 27, 1839, and Nov. 11, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL; Lieber, *Notanda Americana*, April 1, 1847, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁰⁴ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Columbia, June 1, 1845, Lieber Papers, HEH.

to perform quality work. In a letter to Hillard, Lieber asked that he have the marble busts packed that were being sent from Boston to Columbia carefully because “rough handling comes from the negroes.”⁵⁰⁵

In status, Lieber considered slaves below children and similar to animals. In 1847, he noted in his slavery scrapbook, “Few parents consider their children sufficiently as animals... You ought to think now and then what would you do, if your children were as many horses or slaves, to get them sleek and the flesh firm that they might fetch a high price. And you would ruin their stomach by sweet-meats.” Unlike his children, upon whom he spent large sums, Lieber sometimes considered slaves as a potential moneymaking opportunity.⁵⁰⁶

Even before Lieber relocated to the South, he complained of black persons’ scent. According to Mark M. Smith in *How Race is Made*, the “notion that black smell was innate and not indicative of a lack of hygiene” was a common belief of Americans, North and South. To many elites, “the way blacks smelled was an olfactory confirmation of innate difference and affirmation of hierarchy of the human species.” An 1835 entry in Lieber’s *Notanda Americana* during his residence in Philadelphia read, “I was talking this morning in Chesnut Street... when a procession of bricklayers and other merchants passed... [S]uddenly I smelt [sic] something offensive and looking up I found that the train of white men in the procession had ended, and the colored hod-bearers were now passing. The rancidity of smell increased so much that we had to go out of the way... I cannot give it otherwise than a beetle scent... the odor of rancidness, besides the smell of perspiration which they have in common with the white man. As I could smell the

⁵⁰⁵ Lieber to Hillard, Jan. 15, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁰⁶ Lieber, “Notanda Americana” and “Slavery Scrapbook,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

different religious orders in Rome...so I can here discern by scent the colors...I think [just as] each race anatomically differs from each other, [it] has its peculiar scented evaporation.” Lieber had disapproved of Catholics in Rome, so a comparison between their scent and that of blacks was no compliment coming from him.⁵⁰⁷

In his 1846 Miami University address, Lieber used an example which demonstrated his opinion of the lowness of the black race. “I have at this moment an old, now departed, negro slave in my mind, whom I have never seen otherwise than obliging, polite, anticipating, dignified, true, and forbearing – in short, a gentleman in his lowly sphere.” Underscoring his point, the professor said, “As a matter of course, this can take place by way of exception only; but the more difficult the exception the more honourable is the instance.” In addition, Lieber believed that slaves were practically incapable of being “honorable,” much less “obliging, polite, anticipating, dignified, true, and forbearing.”⁵⁰⁸

The Southern master demonstrated either displeasure or undue control over his slaves’ names. On buying a slave from Beaufort, he wrote his wife Matilda in 1841, “Did I tell you that our servant’s name is George? Short enough, but I dislike it.” Betsy’s daughter, Elsa, expected a baby and would soon give birth. Lieber wrote home, “Tell Elza that absolutely no name shall be given to the forthcoming brat, until I return, or you have decided.” Despite the fact that Elsa would deliver the child, Lieber wanted either he

⁵⁰⁷ Smith, *How Race is Made*, 14-15; Lieber, “Negroes,” *Notanda Americana*, June 5, 1835, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁰⁸ Lieber, “The Character of the Gentleman,” 230.

or his wife to name it. He deigned to tell his wife, “You may of course give whatever name you think fit.”⁵⁰⁹

Lieber strayed from the benevolent side of paternalism in a startling fashion on at least one occasion. “Yesterday I found a dead mouse on my dressing table,” he wrote his wife in 1839. “[W]hen I called Elsa, she asked my pardon, she had ‘just put it there when cleaning the room’ and, taking it out of the trap...had forgotten it! I was just going to box her ears, when I could not help laughing, and she escaped.” This statement demonstrated that Lieber sometimes struck his slaves if sufficiently roused. Feeling disgusted with Elsa specifically and slaves in general, he wrote, “Those creatures, I mean negroes, not dead mice, lose all senses of time space relation.” Lieber then uttered a harsh threat: “Putting a dead mouse on a dressing table ever, I told her, ‘if I should find another dead mouse’ in some such place that she would carry it in her mouth, (at least by the tail) [and I] shall make good my word, even though it were a dead green rat.”⁵¹⁰

B. Paternalism

Despite his racial prejudice and occasional fits of temper, for the most part Lieber nonetheless treated his slaves according to nineteenth-century Southern standards of paternalism. The professor delighted in educating his slaves, even though it was illegal. “Mary had been s[e]wing in the piazza and put the sheet and her work on a chair. I went, put it on the ground, to seat myself, and found in the sheet a spelling book. I asked her whether she could spell. Yes, Sir. And how did you learn it?” Lieber asked. “Master Norman taught me the A B C and spelling,” Mary replied. “When I was sewing in the nursery, he would come and teach me, when I begged him.” Lieber exulted in his son’s

⁵⁰⁹ Lieber to Matilda, Charleston, SC, June 31 [sic] and July 2, 1841, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵¹⁰ Lieber to Matilda, Columbia to Hamburg, Oct. 27, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL.

kindness: “Is this not to you as deeply touching as to [me]. It is a most lovely picture in my mind.” His family did not teach all their slaves to read, however. For example, “I just had to read a letter to Rose our black girl.”⁵¹¹

The master provided decent, if not fashionable, clothing for his slaves: “[T]he negroes are provided with flannel, homespun, thread, and stockings,” he wrote to his wife in 1838. In another letter, he added, “Tell Rebecca that it is a great comfort to me to know my boys [are] with so good a girl a nurse as she is.” Although Rebecca was an Irish servant, Lieber treated her in a similar paternalistic fashion to his house slaves, as if they were all his serfs. After all, Lieber had been to Ireland and knew that the peasants there were starving. Through his paternalism, the Irish girl received food, shelter, and a family. In another epistle, he requested, “Kiss my dear Oscar, my dear Hamy, my dear Normy, and tell Rebecca that I always remember her with my little ones.” From New York, he told Matilda, “I shall buy a gown for Rebecca.” Lieber the *padrone* made sure all the servants under his roof were sufficiently clothed.⁵¹²

Lieber allowed Betsy to work for her own profit and spend the wages she earned. In his slavery notebook, he wrote, “Betsy buys a most brilliant muslin dress for Elza. She makes cakes and suppers for students, and asks enormous prices for them, e.g. Turkey price 3 dollars [\$80 in 2016.]” On another occasion in 1839, Lieber told his wife, “that woman boiled a ham for the students, and got for the boiling half a dollar!” Betsy repaid a loan of fifty cents that Matilda Lieber had previously made her. The enslaved cook had a brilliant wardrobe and even traveled on at least one occasion: “Betsy goes with silk gown, stockings, open bonnet, gloves +c to church! Her husband a carpenter, but not

⁵¹¹ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Mar. 1, 1844, and “Notanda Americana,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵¹² Lieber to Matilda Lieber, July 16, 1838, Sept. 8, 1838, June 20, 1838, and June 9, 1845, Lieber Papers, HEH.

belonging to me, went in the stage coach at Christmas, for a week to Newbern to see his mother.” Producing a rare compliment, Lieber wrote, “Betsy I think looks very well, and dresses very decently and respectably.” Betsy’s fine clothes probably derived from her earnings.⁵¹³

In 1840, Lieber nearly purchased Betsy’s husband so the couple would not be separated. When she told her master “with a long face” that James’ owner was on the verge of relocating to Mississippi, Lieber “reflected and resolved, highly inconvenient as it would be, as to money, and hateful as to this [type] of investment, to buy James, if I could possibly do so – I would not have minded a sacrifice on my part. James said he cost \$1500; which is for my means enormous.” While talking with him at church, his colleague Stephen Elliott offered a donation to the cause. When Lieber went to call on James’ owner, a reliable source informed him that the man was insane and could not possibly move to Mississippi, so Betsy and James remained together without Lieber’s being required to purchase the enslaved mechanic for three-quarters of his yearly salary.⁵¹⁴

Like many Southern slaveholders, Lieber believed that any fondness he had for his slaves was certainly reciprocated. He seemed oblivious to the concept that slaves might pretend great affection because expected to do so or simply to receive better treatment. Lieber believed that Betsy was extremely attached to the family. After their trip to Germany, when Matilda and the boys decided to spend the summer of 1845 in the North rather than return to hot Columbia, Lieber wrote, “Betsy, poor thing is much disappointed that her mistress does not come until October.” When the ship arrived from

⁵¹³ Lieber, “Slavery Notebook,” April 27, 1839, Lieber Papers, HEH; Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Columbia, Oct. 14 and Oct. 27, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL.

⁵¹⁴ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, May 12 and May 19, 1840, Lieber Papers, SCL.

Germany, Lieber felt elated to know that his wife and sons were safe, and was sure that Betsy had the same emotion. “Betsy was very much rejoiced to hear that her mistress has arrived, and I read to her a kind message from your letter,” Lieber informed his wife. “She feels very proud. She thinks wonders of her mistress.” Betsy kept asking Lieber when his wife and the boys would return because “it is mighty lonesome without her and the children,” Lieber related in another missive. During another separation in 1839, he wrote, “She [Betsy] really does all she can, we get along remarkably well, she is proud of her missus – ‘by far the best missus that lives’, and wishes to please you as much as she can.”⁵¹⁵

Demonstrating not only class but also ethnic hierarchy, Lieber considered the children’s Irish nurse, Rebecca, in much the same way as he did his slaves. He spoke of her with more respect, as he believed befitted her white skin, but demonstrated the same paternalistic behavior, the respected German professor was assisting a free Irish peasant worker. In yet another letter during his wife’s absence, he related that “Rebecca says she cannot hear boys talk without crying” because the two youngest boys that she had tended as nurse were so far away. When he was about to join his wife and sons in Europe in 1844, he discussed Rebecca in correspondence: “Poor Rebecca yet came and helped me packing, tears actually dropping upon stockings and shirts, pants and drawers as they were packed away – a pickle of affection...I promised her the boys would write her...She loves nothing on earth half so much as Norman.” In another lengthy epistle to his wife, Lieber reported: “Rebecca had tears in her eyes, first when I read from the letter, and then when...she found the negro-doll.” The “servant” doll was for Rebecca’s baby who was

⁵¹⁵ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Feb. 29, 1844, Mar. 5, 1844, May 13, 1845, May 28, 1845, and June 11, 1845, HEH; Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Oct. 14, 1839, Lieber Papers, SCL.

just beginning to talk. On still another occasion, Lieber remarked, “Rebecca sends a thousand loves to all of you.” He was thoroughly convinced that the Irish peasant Rebecca loved “her” fine Saxon family more than anything else in the world.⁵¹⁶

In 1845, Lieber bluntly stated to his wife his belief that blacks required white assistance. “‘Who,’ I said yester-day at dinner[,] ‘brought you into this house, Henry?’ He waited a while, reflecting...and at last said, ‘I think it is god who puts coloured children to kind masters and missuses.’ He uttered it half interrogatively, as though he was not quite sure.” With a paternal fondness, Lieber mused, “There was something very sweet in it.” He continued his plans for educating the slaves; when the boys returned from Germany, Henry hoped Norman would teach him how to read and Betsy wanted Oscar to teach her. Interestingly, Lieber did not plan to teach the slaves himself. Like those around him, he believed that Southern slaves could not adequately care for themselves and required assistance, which they received from their elite owners. The enslaved working class, then, enjoyed a more positive life than did the poor Lieber had encountered in Europe.⁵¹⁷

IV. Lieber’s Opinions of the Poor Laborers and Serfs in Europe

As a result of his early life in Europe and his later year-long visit in 1844, Lieber reflected on the circumstances of the working classes in Britain and the Continent. In his writings on slavery, Lieber related the details of a Columbia slave auction featuring “the late Mr Pollock’s slaves” in 1850. While on the auction block, an old woman told a potential buyer that she would not leave Columbia. People laughed at her, but “one of the young Pollocks stepped forward and said, ‘Well, if old Keziah wont [sic] leave Columbia,

⁵¹⁶ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Feb. 29, 1844, Mar. 5, 1844, May 13, 1845, May 28, 1845, June 11, 1845, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵¹⁷ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, June 1845, Lieber Papers, HEH.

I suppose I must buy her, if you (to the bidder) will give her up.” The bidder acquiesced, and Keziah remained in her hometown as she had determined she would. “What a mixture. A human being on the auction table and then a regard which would be paid to no Irish woman, no German pauper,” Lieber commented, speaking directly from his European experiences. “The free man must go where he finds a crust of bread, but a slave domestic generally chooses his master.” This observation contained equal conviction with those of Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston.⁵¹⁸

During a year’s residence in Britain in 1826, Lieber developed a great sympathy for the Irish. Lieber supported Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston’s concept that the Irish suffered British domination, which impoverished and weakened them. In a missive to Sumner in 1839, Lieber denounced Britain’s heavy-handed rule of the smaller island nation: “[L]ook at Ireland...she was shamefully governed.” He added, “Ireland must be better ruled.” As a result, the Irish people were politically weak and vulnerable. “There is no doubt but that in order to become such a man as he is,” Lieber said of Irish politician and abolitionist Daniel O’Connell, “a vast ignorant multitude [the Irish] weeded [sic] by priests and all that, and oppressed too, is necessary.” Comparing the Irish situation to that of white slavery, Lieber declared, “I consider the Irish question as difficult a one as our slave-question, although entirely different. As long as Ireland is popish...it will feel uneasy united to England.” Linking their dependent state to their religious and political domination, Lieber explained that “the Irish are so thoroughly Romish, in consequence of their long oppression.” He viewed Irish Catholic oppression in much the same way that Preston calculated the Italian Catholic political situation.”⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ Lieber, “A Scene,” Nov. 4, 1850; and “Slavery Notebook,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵¹⁹ Lieber to Sumner, Feb. 2, 1839, Lieber Papers, HEH.

Lieber felt that even the birds in South Carolina enjoyed a better situation than that of the Irish. In 1847, he wrote of a happy exchange with his son Norman concerning the fact that their canaries had laid three eggs. “Happy things, compared to the Irish!” Lieber said of the canaries, which had food for themselves and their coming children. “To say the truth we cannot possibly realize...the misery it must be, to see one’s own starve – to ask for bread and to have none, or to ask no more for it with half-broken eye: My God!” Lieber loved all three of his sons, had a fond affection and comradeship with his wife, and deeply sympathized with Irish peasants who could not adequately care for their own.⁵²⁰

He reluctantly, but definitely, pitied the British poor, scorning the rich who espoused abolitionism and ignored their native poor who endured what he deemed a far worse situation. “I wonder that Carlisle allowed his sister the duchess to have that [abolitionist] ladies meeting at Stafford House,” he wrote Hillard in 1853. “I have ever considered it a poor argument, when we here speak about slavery, to point to Ireland or the London poor, but the moment I read about that meeting, I could not help thinking: And were they stirred when Mayeh made his heart rending revelations of the state of crying misery and woeful immorality among the hundred thousands of London poor.” Lieber had, at first, felt reluctant to make the comparison, but contact with the Southern slaves, in addition to his time in Great Britain, finally convinced him of that key element of proslavery philosophy.⁵²¹

He even predicted, in common with Thornwell, that the unfeeling despotism wielded over the European poor might well cause revolution: “An excitement such as

⁵²⁰ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, May 4, 1847 and Feb. 25, 1847, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵²¹ Lieber to Hillard, Jan. 15, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

exists at present in Europe will produce a revolution in a year or two,” he told Hillard. Rather than implementing American reforms, the English would use Southern slavery as an excuse, Lieber lamented. “It is so welcome to many millions on the continent to be able to say: Ah, about that American and fine republican liberty, look at Uncle Tom. Rather give us our state of things, or as the French will express it to cover their shame: Rather equality without liberty than liberty that requires slavery.” Through this quote, Lieber indicated his conviction that the English and French suffered more through their lack of liberty than the South did with its lack of equality.⁵²²

Lieber continued the topic with Hillard in his next letter in 1853. “But you are pretty right as to what you say about the address of the English duchesses and marchionesses. I think it a very poor argument – a favorite one here – to answer attacks on slavery, by saying, Look at your paupers.” The hypocritical impudence of the abolitionists, however, had broken down Lieber’s resistance and he spoke in the opposite vein: “But when the women of one country presume thus to meddle with the feelings of another, one can not help thinking of the heart-rending accounts of mayhem of [the book] London labour and the Poor. Have you read it?” When Lieber read this volume on the squalor attending the poor, his own haunting memories of the British working class verified the author’s words. “No book has ever harrowed thus my feelings. Have those duchesses met and consulted when that sorrow, suffering, filth, vice and turpitude was laid bare?” Lieber thought it absurd for these abolitionist ladies to worry about slaves on another continent when their own working class was destitute. Remarking on a recent comment by Henry Foote, a Mississippi senator, Lieber exclaimed, “To be sure, no one said: All this is a social, moral, and political blessing, as Foote called slavery in the

⁵²² Lieber to Hillard, Jan. 15, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

Senate; but have they energetically gone to work to do their utmost to alleviate those crying evils and horrors?” Lieber deemed praise of slavery far more logical than British abolitionists’ indifferent acceptance of their own working class’ sobering situation.⁵²³

The Napoleonic War veteran felt a great sympathy for the French working classes as well, whose starvation he had personally witnessed in 1815 and during later sojourns in the nation. In 1852, he jeered at the report that “in France 23 out of 24 went” to the polls to vote. From his own knowledge, Lieber stated that “the vast majority of French peasants are suffering wretches caring very little for elections of which they do not understand a word.” He contributed a newspaper article concerning Louis Napoleon Bonaparte’s recent election that another author attacked in the Boston paper. Lieber retorted, “Everything that has transpired, since I wrote that calculation not only confirms what I have said, but shows that I was below the mark. Why, there are daily 100,000 people in prison in France; 100[,]000 in the hospitals – and besides thousands of maniacs or insane,” he explained to Hillard. Considering the evidence coupled with his own personal observance of France, Lieber suspected that the “yes” votes for Louis Napoleon had been a mere “minimum.” The German-American had not agreed with the French revolutions, nor did he praise the “coup d’état” that “must beget and is begetting another revolt.” Their miserable situation would continue “ad infinitum until the French will learn what institutional liberty is.”⁵²⁴

Lieber then presented his view of France’s national foolishness: “French now a days talk about politics – and especially about England and the United States, in a pretenceful and didactic manner.” Referencing their peasant misery and government

⁵²³ Lieber to Hillard, Feb. 3, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵²⁴ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Mar. 6, 1852, and Mar. 9, 1852, Lieber Papers, HEH.

failure, he observed, “It is one thing for a nation to be oppressed with misfortune, it is another thing to cover itself with shame...it is still another thing to glory in its shame and folly.” He wrote, in words eerily similar to those of his despised colleague Thornwell, “Perhaps God has seen it necessary to make the French thoroughly sick of imperialism, if indeed one can imagine that God cares for the French in a political character, of which one may doubt very much.” In 1852, he exclaimed to Sumner: “Oh, the French with their infernal centralization and mouth love of the masses!” The peasantry and working class were duped and degraded by “a convulsive explosion [which] gave...fearful power to Communism, Socialism and all other sorts of French democratic absolutism.” Considering the lack of working class political knowledge, he predicted that the French situation would grow still worse.⁵²⁵

Through an analysis of a historical situation, Lieber indicated his belief that slavery was a superior alternative to poverty. In his slavery scrapbook, Lieber included an interesting note on “Fletcher of Saltoun (who wrote about 1698).” He reported that Fletcher, “after having given the frightful state of morals in Scotland, and that...people were living in utter wretchedness, proposes the re-establishment of domestic slavery. [Historian] Southey, entirely and decidedly opposed to slavery, yet says: “Fletcher was a lover of liberty and a sincere one.” Lieber seemed to be attempting to reconcile his ardent love of liberty with his approval of the slave system. Lieber further mused, “Slavery as a Poor Law. – I have frequently said the same thing.”⁵²⁶

While visiting Prussia in 1851, Lieber attended the Laborer’s Friend Association meeting and made the Earl of Shaftesbury’s acquaintance. Nicknamed the “Poor Man’s

⁵²⁵ Lieber to Hillard, Feb. 3, 1853, and Lieber to Sumner, Mar. 11, 1852, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵²⁶ Lieber, “Slavery Scrapbook,” Lieber Papers, HEH.

Earl,” this rare nobleman “fought vigorously...to provide more humane working conditions for millions of workers,” targeted issues such as “social and economic hunger, disease, and illiteracy,” and strove for “the poor...to be accorded basic human rights.” Lieber evinced great interest in European rehabilitation and aid programs for the poor, attesting to the great need for them and discussing them in his lectures.⁵²⁷

Unlike Thornwell and Cooper, Lieber felt so much in sympathy with the British poor that he actually trusted them not to revolt. In an essay entitled “History and Political Science Necessary Studies in Free Countries” in 1858, he expounded: “When a few weeks ago the widely-spread misery in the manufacturing districts of England was spoken of in the British house of lords, one that has been at the helm [Lord Darby] concluded his speech with an avowal that the suffering laborers who could find but half days’, nay, quarter days’ employment, with the unreduced wants of their families, nevertheless had resorted to no violence, but on the contrary acknowledged that they knew full well that a factory cannot be kept working unless the master can work to a profit.” Impressed with the deprived workers’ forbearance, he made his own commentary on the situation: “[T]hose who know the chronicles of the mediaeval cities, and of modern times down to a period when most of us recollect, know also that in all former days the distressed laborer would first of all have resorted to a still greater increase of distress, by violence and destruction.” Giving full credit to the British operatives, he explained, “Who, or what has restrained our own sorely distressed population from violence...if it is not a sounder knowledge and a correcter [sic] feeling regarding the

⁵²⁷ Lieber to Hillard, Feb. 5, 1851, Lieber Papers, SCL. The Earl of Shaftesbury is described in Emeka Anyaoku, “The Commonwealth and the Ideals of Shaftesbury” in *The Missing Headlines: Selected Speeches by Emeka Anyaoku* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 43.

relations of wealth, of capital and labor, which in spite of the absurdities of communism has penetrated to some degree all layers of society?”⁵²⁸

Corresponding with Samuel Ruggles in 1855, Lieber likewise pitied the German peasant, a figure with whom he was extremely familiar from twenty-six years in Prussia and visits since. “[I]f the German peasant has to choose between liberty and water on the one hand and despotism with beer on the other, he will stick to the latter. No wonder! The stomach, too, has its inalienable rights!” Lieber often lamented over the German region’s slowness to adopt more democratic governments, but understood that the peasant had little choice in the matter.⁵²⁹

V. Lieber’s Disgust for Abolitionism

In light of Lieber’s approval of serfdom, similar opinions to his Southern slaveholding friends, his interactions with his own slaves, and his personal observations of European poverty, it is not surprising to discover that he stated similar views about abolition and abolitionists in common with Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston. He criticized specific abolitionists, such as Daniel O’Connell and William Lloyd Garrison, and referred to abolition as fanatical and radical. The professor even demonstrated displeasure

⁵²⁸ Lieber, “History and Political Science Necessary Studies in Free Countries, An Inaugural Address Delivered on the 17th of February, 1858, on Assuming the Chair of History and Political Science, in Columbia College, NY,” in *Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, vol. 1, 350-351.

⁵²⁹ Lieber to Ruggles, Columbia, May 1855, Lieber Papers, SCL; Lieber, “History and Political Science Necessary Studies in Free Countries,” 331. In an essay in 1858, Lieber reminisced about Prussia’s situation in which French despotism temporarily crushed it: “When Prussia was humbled, crippled, and impoverished beyond the conception of those that have never seen with their bodily eyes universal destitution and national ruin, there were men left that did not despair, like the foundation walls of a burnt house.” Lieber remembered from his childhood, “They resolved to prepare even in those evil days, even in the presence of the victorious hosts, which spread over the land like an inundation in which the ramified system of police drew the narrow-meshed seine for large and small victims – even then to prepare for a time of resuscitation.” Change was quite slow to take root, but Lieber rejoiced over the slow improvements which made liberty and sustenance possible for his Prussian countrymen.

with the North, calling its embrace of abolition and democracy similar to the “red republicanism” and “socialism” of the French Revolutions.

A. Dislike of Certain Abolitionists

Lieber considered the foremost abolitionists of his day to be fanatical lunatics who desired to wreck society. Even in communication with Sumner, fast becoming one of the North’s foremost abolitionists, Lieber did not prevaricate: “What do you think of the madhouse speeches of Wendell Philips and G. [Garrison] on the abolition platform in N.Y.? Down with the country down with the church, down with the constitution – why not add, Down with God?” Lieber affirmed the Constitution as the keystone of the world’s best government, and like his nemesis Thornwell, he considered the reconstruction of society an affront to God. “These men exhibit the thousand time exhibited phenomenon of men sinking into fanatical idolatry of their cause, and making it...the exclusive end of this life, just as the founders of many religious orders idolized one particular passage of the bible” to the exclusion of others. Lieber despised religious fanaticism, so his comparing it with abolitionism was a grave insult.⁵³⁰

In an 1839 letter to Sumner, Lieber denounced the Irish abolitionist Daniel O’Connell; Cooper, Thornwell and Preston expressed a similar opinion. Although the professor did not specifically target O’Connell’s abolitionist thought, his indignation over Phillips and Garrison, wedded with his complete disapproval of O’Connell, strongly indicates that he disliked his abolitionist fanaticism. “O’Connell seems to play the devil in Ireland.” If the United Kingdom did not hold Britain and Ireland together, Lieber avowed, “I am sure, he would from that instance cease to be the national, enormous

⁵³⁰ Lieber to Sumner, Columbia, May 22, 1847, Lieber Papers, HEH.

leader, and dwindle to a party leader. I think he has of late behaved like a fool towards the English and very much sunk there.” To Lieber, this abolitionist firebrand behaved with “impudence,” exhibited “very shallow notions,” and constituted “a demagogue.”⁵³¹

In another letter to Ruggles in 1855, Lieber derided “Garrisonism” as another fanatical malady of their times, along with tee-totalism and Mormonism, two movements which many persons of the time deemed extreme. Like Thornwell, Lieber categorized abolitionism with other movements of the day that tried to aid marginalized groups: “The women’s rights movement belongs to the caricatures of our age one of whose characteristics undoubtedly is the yearning for manfully established and acknowledged rights, and the caricatures which grow out of the movement of the times itself.” He told his confidante Hillard, “I am collecting all sorts of things on Socialism and that sort of furibundism. The Fanny-Wrighters are of the same tribe.” In chauvinistic fashion, he continued, “I am very willing to approach them qua philosopher, but save me from personal intercourse with them unless indeed there was some very pretty recalcitrant to be converted.” Basically calling male abolitionists weak and ineffectual, he continued, “I wonder whether your true blue abolitionist is not a women’s-rights-man. The thing would be natural.” Likewise, Lieber considered the temperance movement in the northeast to be a fanatical avoidance of innocent pleasure for an extreme cause.⁵³²

In 1837, Lieber wrote to Matilda from Boston with dry humor of what he considered abolitionists’ ludicrous fear of Southern slaveholders. “I found an article here in the Boston Liberator,” he recounted, “in which the coloured people are told that now

⁵³¹ Lieber to Sumner, Columbia, Feb. 2, 1839, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵³² Lieber to Ruggles, Columbia, May 1855, Lieber Papers, SCL; Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Feb. 15, 1851 and June 5, 1852, Lieber Papers, HEH. The June 5 letter discusses Lieber’s disdain for the Massachusetts’ law against alcohol and the temperance movement.

the annual convention of the clergy will take place, that many ministers from the South are to be present, and that they are all of them professional kidnappers.” This abolitionist paper gravely warned the black population: ““Shut your doors, bolt your windows...these ministers go about in the evening and steal your little ones. While they speak in the assembly about Christ and the immortality of the souls, they fasten their eyes upon your sons and daughters to kidnap them, especially now, because they will be obliged to give some money here for collections, and they wish to re-imburse themselves in this way.”” Knowing his friend and fellow slaveholder would also consider this dramatic warning ridiculous, Lieber urged Matilda, “Tell Mr. McCord of this.”⁵³³

B. Abolitionism as Threat to the Union

Lieber’s staunch Unionism, although it fostered a different states’ rights philosophy than that of his colleagues, did not place him at odds with slavery. Similarly, Preston supported Unionism for the last twenty years of his life, but remained strongly in favor of slavery. Even Thornwell declared himself against secession in the 1850s and only sanctioned the cause in late 1860, when “the die was cast.” In 1847, Lieber delineated in a letter to his confidante Hillard his fear that abolitionism would sever the Union, referencing the recent struggle in which the South fought against the admission of California, a free state. “I love my wife, God knows it, but I should not feel her loss more than the breaking up of the Union. What a prospect!” The man who longed for German unification dreaded secession. Moreover, he did not believe that secession would bring an end the slavery question: “If the Union breaks up, mark me, the South will become madly protective for a while, and the old process will begin again – an antislavery party will rise in Virginia, and spread to N. Carolina.” Prophetically, he continued, “Possibly, a reunion

⁵³³ Lieber to Matilda Lieber, Aug. 2, 1837, Lieber Papers, HEH.

might take place, but after what bloodshed! What vindictiveness!” Lieber advocated “[r]ational views on slavery” within the United States, as opposed to abolitionist “frenzy.” He explained, “[N]o fanaticism one way or the other; no burst-the-Union in the North; no slavery-beauty party in the South.” During the virulent North-South aggression of 1854, Lieber declared that “anti-slavery feelings and convictions are fast assuming in the North that substance which makes a conviction rather a part of the character of a man than a mere basis of discussion.” Like Thornwell and Preston, he distinguished abolition as fanaticism.⁵³⁴

The professor explained his conviction that abolition was the Union’s main menace: “I must say that I consider it highly injudicious and out of order to press Abolition in the D[istrict] of Columbia,” he wrote Hillard in 1849. “If the inhabitants themselves fairly petition for it, undoubtedly they should have it, but to impose it upon them, placed as they are between two slave holding states is unquestionably wrong and amounts to a use of power which legally indeed belongs to Congress, but...is not to be wielded in the spirit of our whole polity and political life.” He strongly denounced the Free-Soilers: “Are not the Free-Soilers abashed at the dirty throngs of their Congress men? and the brats [their relations] with the democratic party and the slave-holders has produced, like witches whom Satan covered?” Lieber believed that the Democratic Party was being corrupted through abolitionist politicians. He declared the anti-slavery crowd to be more vituperative than the proslavery contingent. Massachusetts “abolitionists seem to be amiable people!” he wrote to Hillard in 1854. “‘Spitting Washington in the face’ is very choice and high-souled. I think it beats any pro-slavery slang.”⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ Lieber to Hillard, Feb. 25, 1847, and Lieber to Hillard, May 26, 1854, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵³⁵ Lieber to Hillard, Dec. 29, 1849 and June 21, 1854, Lieber Papers, HEH.

Ever jealous for federal government power, Lieber believed that abolitionists were nullifiers in their own right. “It has often struck me that your abolitionists, rampant free-soilers and id genus have a very particular regard for Calhoun,” he told Hillard in 1852. “Is it because Calhoun was the most prominent of the plain spoken defenders of slavery, so that he furnished them with the best points of attack? Or is it not rather because Calhoun was the most prominent representation of extravagant state rights’ doctrine?” Lieber confided to his friend, “It cannot be denied that this too is a striking feature of your abolitionists.” Turning to his habit of critiquing Sumner, he mentioned to their mutual friend that “[Sumner’s] whole idea how the fugitive slave law ought to be managed [i.e., disobeyed] between the states [is] very nullificatory.” In fact, Lieber hinted to Sumner himself that the senator was too soft on federal constitutional power and wrongly viewed the states as equal in power to the federal government.⁵³⁶

The German-American professor made it clear that he was no abolitionist by distancing himself from the group in the following statement in 1842: “You ask, what will become of slavery. Ah! My dear Hillard, it is a subject that saddens my mind more than yours I believe, or that of any abolitionist.” Lieber viewed abolitionism as being in violation of accepted religion: “I had heard two speeches on Slavery in the House of Representatives, the one as bold as anyone spoke in the North, the other bold too, indeed, but I thought both in high treason against God, the Almighty himself.” He believed abolitionists were of generally bad character and that their cause was a frivolous one. Complimenting the stamina despite illness of his old friend Dorothea Dix for

⁵³⁶ Lieber to Hillard, Nov. 21, 1852, and Lieber to Sumner, Feb. 18, 1852, Lieber Papers, HEH. In a letter dated May 20, 1851, Lieber frankly told Sumner that he wished he had not won the race for U.S. Senator from Massachusetts.

humanitarian causes, Lieber remarked in 1851, “How different is the sterling character of that woman from all the free soil froth and embittered passion!”⁵³⁷

On the whole, Lieber found abolitionist papers distasteful. Complimenting Sumner on his article concerning “White Slavery” in 1849, Lieber requested that he send copies to two Southerners. The copy destined for Thornwell was out of sheer antagonism, as he judged that Thornwell would hate any argument against slavery. It was best to send the other copy to Preston’s wife rather than to Preston himself, Lieber explained, “because he, receiving in common with us all occasionally furibund publications from the abolitionists (sometimes pictures, which represent the Southerner in the act of whipping the negro to death) might throw it aside unread when simply looking at the title.” Lieber demonstrated that he disliked receiving abolitionist papers himself and viewed them as overly sentimental and exaggerated. The Southern resident advised Sumner, “If [the publication is intended for] the South, your repeated mention of the ‘peculiar institution’, in brackets, is a taunt which must impede its effort.”⁵³⁸

C. Break with Sumner

Sacrificed relationships with his valued Northern friends further demonstrated his strong opposition to abolitionism. The professor valued his friendships with Samuel Gridley Howe, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Fanny Appleton Longfellow. Most of all, he was deeply attached to Charles Sumner, his closest friend for 25 years. Expressions of friendship appeared in Lieber’s many letters to him, and Lieber attested that Sumner’s letters were also “full of the warmest affection.” In 1840, Lieber

⁵³⁷ Lieber to Hillard and Sumner, Columbia, Dec. 17, 1842, and Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, May 1851, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵³⁸ Lieber to Sumner, May 28, 1847, Lieber Papers, HEH.

wrote, “Sumner, your friendship is very dear to me. I thank God for it, and count it among the things worth being counted in my life.”⁵³⁹

Sumner and Lieber’s ruptured friendship has fascinated Lieber historians. In *Conjectures of Order*, Michael O’Brien explains Lieber and Sumner’s break due to the fact that Lieber acknowledged “that many slaveholders had their own kind of honesty [and Sumner] could not understand this.” Since Lieber justified himself along with the other slaveholders, when Sumner began sending him abolitionist mail, he “grew irritated at the reproach to him, the morally complex man in a morally complex situation.” This is no doubt part of the situation, but this study focuses on how Lieber exposed his own proslavery beliefs through his breakup with Sumner.⁵⁴⁰

In an article entitled “Francis Lieber, Charles Sumner, and Slavery,” Frank Friedel explains their break of friendship in the following sentence: “Sumner...rapidly underwent a metamorphosis from a scholarly young esthete into a militant abolitionist. The change brought a gradual coolness between the two old friends.” To explain Lieber’s view, Friedel states: “Lieber deplored the intemperate agitation of Sumner and the abolitionists as the main cause of growing secessionist feeling in the South.” While concocting proposals for the improvement of the slave system in an effort to halt the abolitionists who encouraged secession, Friedel argues, Lieber came to dislike the institution even more. This chapter argues, in contrast, that the friendship ruptured when Lieber dropped the veil on his proslavery beliefs, allowing Sumner to see that he believed

⁵³⁹ Lieber to Sumner, NY, August 13, 1840, in *Life and Letters of Francis Lieber*, 146.

⁵⁴⁰ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 73-76, 78.

slaves were treated well in the South. After this break and the escalation of Northern abolitionist action, Lieber felt even more comfortable with slavery and the South.⁵⁴¹

As Lieber expanded his opposition to abolitionism, and his Northern friends increased their dedication to it, the relationships deteriorated. Almost every summer, Lieber visited the North, spending much of his time with Sumner and their mutual friends. While vacationing there, Lieber and Longfellow had a “vigorous disagreement” on the subject of slavery. In 1848, Lieber wrote to Samuel Howe, asking him to stop “teas[ing him] about slavery.” Most importantly, he suffered a dramatic falling-out, after a few years of heavy strain, with his closest friend Sumner in 1853. The problem began at a dinner at Longfellow’s in 1849, in which Lieber defended slavery as humane, remarking that Southern slaves enjoyed better lives than those in the West Indies. Recounting the conversation, he later confided to his friend Dorothea Dix, “I said that as to physical treatment the slaves were upon the whole well off in the South.” Sumner and Lieber’s discussion grew into a fierce argument about slavery that evening. Afterward, Sumner asked Lieber if he was “an apologist of slavery” and then directly stated that he had “become an apologist of slavery” in a letter. This greatly offended Lieber, although the statement was, in reality, not far from the mark.⁵⁴²

The situation escalated when Sumner tried to convert Lieber to the abolitionist cause through an aggressive deluge of mail. The professor despaired to Hillard in 1850, “Last night I had again a paper from Sumner with some nasty slave business marked for my particular benefit. He has done this several times. I do not think that this it is right and

⁵⁴¹ Friedel, “Francis Lieber, Charles Sumner, and Slavery, *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Feb. 1943), 75-93.

⁵⁴² Lieber to Samuel Gridley Howe, May 22, 1848, and Lieber to a friend [Dorothea Dix], NY, April 18, 1858, in *Life and Letters*, 214, 297.

proper.” After all, he could personally view the flaws in slavery “day and night, without friends taking my finger and putting it on this and that unpleasant thing. Would it be either kind or gentlemanly or right in me if I were to mark all passages which I find in Southern papers against the North or N. England whenever a riot or a murder has been committed?” This statement reveals that Lieber viewed Northern society as too democratic and given to revolt, unlike the secure and peaceful slave South of his experience.⁵⁴³

Sumner continued to plague Lieber, who reported to Hillard: “Our friend Sumner has honoured me again with a Boston paper with some ten underlined items all relating to slaves or free coloured persons at Richmond having been whipped one for stealing, another for boxing the ears of a white woman, a third for pounding a fellow coloured person +c +c...in the police court.” Grieved by his former friend’s behavior, Lieber lamented, “[T]his is all I ever receive from him.” Lieber attested in 1853 that Sumner sent him newspaper stories with “some extravagant praise of himself or some of these nasty negro stories” for three years.⁵⁴⁴

In May 1853, Lieber contacted Sumner, pleading with him to stop. “It is now near three years that you have been in the habit of sending me papers with marked passages containing accounts of negro whippings...I must now beg you to put a stop to this sort of communication.” Lieber said that, under the circumstances, he had been quite forbearing, not having mentioned the matter “ever since we last met at Longfellow’s board,” when their heated argument had occurred. He assured Sumner that he would be pleased to receive letters or other kinds of documents from him, “but if you have really no time to

⁵⁴³ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Feb. 24, 1850, Apr. 6, 1850, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁴⁴ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, March 15, 1853, May 29, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

write to me, pray do not remind me of you in that peculiar manner.” Sumner did not communicate with Lieber for the next decade. Lieber did not again write to Sumner until 1861, when Civil War business required it.⁵⁴⁵

He lost other Northern abolitionist friends, though in a less dramatic fashion. After authoring his major work, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, Lieber complained to Hillard in 1853, “Longf[ellow] wrote me yester-day that he had not yet read it!...I was much displeased with the letter and shall not answer it.” He continued, “I should have written to Julia or to Howe [to ask a certain favor], but they belong to the many people that have become glued up” due to the abolitionist argument. He blamed this on his long absence from the North, but he and Hillard knew the real reason. Later, Lieber admitted, “Of course, the whole connexion, Howe, Longfellow and all treat me among themselves as a worshipper of slavery.”⁵⁴⁶

D. North as Imitator of French Democratic Despotism and Communist Bent

Including slavery as well as other issues, Lieber had far more in common with Thornwell than he would have been willing to admit. Like the Presbyterian minister, he heartily disapproved of all French Revolutions, deeming them not only despotic and un-republican, but also a promise of future socialism and communism, which he despised. In an essay for *Putnam’s Magazine* in 1864, Lieber wrote, “If a man writes the history of the French Revolution, he...is obliged to dip his pen in blood, and get his arm begrimed up to the elbow.” In a letter to Sumner in 1847, he stated that “Napoleon knew how to give the electric shock to large masses,” duping the downtrodden for his own benefit. “[H]e unfitted France for political self-evolvment, for a real internal productive life, for

⁵⁴⁵ Lieber to Sumner, Columbia, May 2, 1853 and New-York, May 24, 1861, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁴⁶ Lieber to Hillard, Nov. 15, 1853 and Columbia, Jan. 4, 1855, Lieber Papers, HEH.

freedom, and, in exactly the same degree as he succeeded, so he made it necessary for her to retrace her steps, and to undo what he had done, would she attain to liberty.” Writing to Hillard in 1848, Lieber expressed his concerns about the current French Revolution. He had just discovered “the whelming news of France having once more torn down the little she had raised, without any attempt at development, at unfolding or cultivating. I saw no liberty in that.” He continued to explain his fears; “I perceived fierce communism – that choker of vigorous independence and destroyer of plenitude of rights – the sickening Shiva idol of democratic absolutism placed where the sacred altar of freedom ought to stand.” More peasants would be sacrificed to the insatiable idol.⁵⁴⁷

Lieber compared the dangers of the 1848 French Revolution to the dangers of Northern manufacturing protection measures: “I donot see how [Webster] can stop in his favorite theory of protection of labour, if he be consistent in any degree, short of” certain extreme French philosophers, “and of acknowledging that the first duty of the South would be to protect our shoe-makers against Lynn, our cotton factories against Lowell,” he told Hillard. Webster would not warn the South, however, because he sought Northern advantage. Lieber continued, “Indeed, protection is nothing but a veiled, (and not very thickly veiled either) communism.”⁵⁴⁸

As an alternative, Lieber desired a “new party, a country party, repudiating Whig and Democrat” that would “embrace Free Trade, that is exchange as God wills it.” This party would have nothing in common with French revolutions: “No absolutism; no aristocracy of the low; no elevation of the shirt-tail into a high priest’s garment and

⁵⁴⁷ Lieber, “Washington and Napoleon,” *Putnam’s Magazine*, 1864, in *Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Lieber*, vol. 1, 413; Lieber to Sumner, Columbia, May 22, 1847, and Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Nov. 9, 1848, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁴⁸ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Nov. 9, 1848, Lieber Papers, HEH.

ignorance into a privilege.” The elite felt it needed protection against the working class. Lieber wanted “[n]one of your democratic gruel to-day, and Jacobinical toddy to-morrow, but sound beef and good wine.”⁵⁴⁹

Much as he loved his homeland, Lieber admitted in 1850 that Prussia’s revolution had traveled in the same democratic absolutist direction, rather than toward republicanism. On his travels in Europe in 1844, Lieber had met with the Prussian monarch, who offered him a position. Due to the political state, however, Lieber related, “I saw at once my place was not with [the king]. When liberty raised her hand in Germany – not very high to be sure – I hastened thither and found that I could not possibly side with the acting liberty party, for they reaked with red republicanism.” Lieber felt that there was more liberty in the South, the land of slavery, than existed in Prussia, which was phasing out serfdom by the 1850s.⁵⁵⁰

The professor believed that “red republican” ideas, such as constituted the French and Prussian Revolutions, were logically followed by democratic absolutism and then socialism and communism. Using his former friend Charles Sumner as an example, Lieber explained his belief that Northern abolitionists had a great deal in common with French revolutionaries and would lead the nation down the slippery slope of democratic absolutism and communism. In 1850, Lieber hoped Sumner would not win the Massachusetts Senate seat because that would “be bad for the Union,” meaning that his abolitionism would hasten Southern secession and thereby sunder the nation in two. Discussing him again with Hillard, Lieber confided that, as senator, “Sumner will record his vote for the most jacobinical measures.” Referring to “Sumner and his friends” as

⁵⁴⁹ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Feb. 25, 1847, and Lieber to Hillard and Sumner, Columbia, Dec. 17, 1842, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁵⁰ Lieber to Hillard, Washington, Aug. 11, 1850, Lieber Papers, HEH.

“Fifth Monarchy men – rouges – jacobins”, he avowed that these “rouges” imitated the individuals who started the French Revolution. Lieber defined fanaticism as “the madly carrying out one truth or principle to an extreme without reference to any other equally important.” In his opinion, fanaticism “has never sown, planted, gathered, blessed, but always destroyed, embittered, ruined or cursed” and was always “eminently selfish, however covertly it may be so, even to itself.” By this statement, he believed that Sumner et al. were enjoying the political prestige they derived from their abolitionist cause and drive for greater democracy in politics.⁵⁵¹

Lieber enumerated the events of 1851 in France and then drew parallels to Sumner and his Northern cronies. Reporting excitedly that Paris was “on fire and Louis Napoleon president for God knows what time,” Lieber reminded Hillard, “Did I not tell you that there is no republic in France, and that in fact the French donot want liberty. They think universal suffrage, absolutism of the majority is liberty!” Lieber preferred protection for the elite, such as existed in Southern society through its control of its enslaved working classes and the elite’s political domination of free “white trash.” Comparing Northern abolitionists to Jacobins, he remarked, “I am sorry that a man like Sumner falls into the use of such terms as fraternity of nations as he did in his [recent] speech.” This phrase, reminiscent of French revolutionary rhetoric, “has never been used but by sanguinary political coxcombs, when it practically means nothing but a shallow...yet arrogant sentimentality...begrimed with blood,” Lieber avowed. Though less active than Sumner, Longfellow was also a Boston abolitionist and the senator’s good friend. “I fear L[on]gfellow is perhaps no less an inconsistency than Sumner,”

⁵⁵¹ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Jan. 16, 1850, Apr. 28, 1851, and April 5, 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

Lieber despaired. “The latter with decided and pervading aristocratic sympathies, strongly inclines to levellism and with a sort of communistic sentimentalism.”⁵⁵²

Referring to recent political decisions and activities of Sumner’s, he declared, “This is absolute Jacobinism, that is, a reckless brandishing about of the lowest and coarsest democratic absolutism known by himself to be ‘impossible, for the mere purpose a hurraing on senseless masses.’” Sumner’s backing of the popular election of judges, Lieber believed, was in line with French democracy rather than American republican ideals.⁵⁵³

In addition to his antagonism toward Northern abolitionists, especially Sumner, Lieber demonstrated distrust of the North as a section, not unlike other Southern elites in Columbia. “Yankeedoodlism” was Lieber’s special name for the behavior of Northern politicians who, he believed, ignored the rights inherent in republican government. He inquired of the Bostonian Hillard if the new proposed Massachusetts constitution had been halted. “It would be the first stopping in the mad career in which of late so many states have harkened toward Multitudinal absolutism, and of historical importance on that account,” he satirized. “I hate Yankeedoodlism.” Praising the states’ voters for refusing the document, he stated, “There is something...very noble in a people rejecting more absolute power which is offered to them.” Lieber demonstrated some hostility against Northern society in 1855 when analyzing Sumner’s political novel, *Lamp-Lighter*: “[H]ow unconsciously the writer Yankee-izes, when the hero and heroine talk together as children how they will make money.” This disdain for Northern capitalism, which stood

⁵⁵² Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Christmas 1851 and Jan. 8, 1852, Lieber Papers, HEH.

⁵⁵³ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Feb. 15, 1852 and April 1853, Lieber Papers, HEH.

at variance to the Southern agricultural world, proved quite similar to the philosophy of antebellum Southern planters.⁵⁵⁴

Conclusion

Despite his declarations to the contrary in his journal and in letters to Northern friends, these same documents, in addition to others, expose the fact that Francis Lieber's thought, philosophy, and – most tellingly – actions, bore remarkable similarity to that of other Southern elite slaveholders. After all, Lieber *was* a Southern elite slaveholder; he resided in Columbia and purchased, sold, hired, managed, and rented out slaves for twenty-one years. He felt a warm regard for his fellow Southern elites, who defended slavery. His familiarity with German serfdom as a Prussian native had predisposed him to sympathize with Southern slaveholders and accept the slave system; his belief in Anglo-Saxon racial superiority led him to see blacks as racially inferior and in need of paternalist assistance.⁵⁵⁵

Having traveled extensively in Europe both before and after his relocation to the United States, Lieber well understood the misery of the British and Continental poor, held in thrall by oppressive rulers. While in Holland, he specifically stated that his slave Betsy had a far better existence than some free laboring women he observed. The professor also denounced the hypocrisy of British abolitionists who agitated for Southern

⁵⁵⁴ Lieber to Hillard, Columbia, Nov. 15, 1853 and June 30, 1855, Lieber Papers, Huntington.

⁵⁵⁵ Deeply embittered toward the South after being denied the SCC presidency, Lieber resigned and moved to the North in 1857. He was appointed professor of history and political science at Columbia College (now University) in New York City. He officially became an abolitionist and a Republican, aiding in both Lincoln's 1860 and 1864 campaigns. Lieber also assisted Lincoln's government throughout the Civil War by giving advice to the president and his cohort on questions concerning civil liberty and political economy, topics on which he was a recognized expert. He also drafted codes to regulate the behavior of the Union troops in war, including Code No. 100, which remained in use for many decades. Toward the end of the war, Lieber proposed constitutional amendments for the eradication of slavery, and, after the conflict was over, sorted the Confederacy's political documents. He died in 1872. References: Lieber, *Diary*, May 18, 1857, and Lieber to Oscar, NY, Autumn 1860, in *Life and Letters*, 294, 314; see also 330-331, 340-341.

slaves' emancipation while ignoring their own suffering working class. Although he was not as benevolent to his slaves as Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston were, he treated them by the paternalistic standards of his day. His SCC students witnessed Lieber's performance as a master on a daily basis.

In his correspondence, Lieber denounced abolitionism as a fanatical contemporary movement full of sentimentality and frenzy. He critiqued well-known Northern abolitionists and severed his twenty-year friendship with Charles Sumner when the latter became one of the North's foremost opponents of slavery. Lieber viewed abolitionism as a threat to the Union's integrity, which he highly valued, and even compared Northern agitators to the democratic absolutists of the French Revolutions, predicting socialism and communism for the nation as a result. Although he hotly denied the accusation when Sumner called him a "proslavery man," inspired by his European influences, Lieber was exactly that.

CHAPTER SIX

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE BATTLEFIELD: STUDENTS' IDEOLOGICAL FORMATION AS A RESULT OF THE PROFESSORS' PROSLAVERY AND STATES' RIGHTS TRAINING

Introduction

Leroy Youmans, class of 1852, reminisced about the “good old days” at South Carolina College (SCC) at its 1905 Centennial Celebration. After affirming the profound influence the college wielded over the state and the region prior to 1860, Youmans credited Thomas Cooper with inspiring the South’s stance on slavery and states’ rights that culminated in the Civil War. He gave an impressive example to clinch his argument: “More than a quarter of a century after Dr. Cooper’s retirement from the College, Langdon Cheves, the younger, so prominent in civic and military life, late in 1860, when the question of secession was excitedly” discussed, made a telling declaration. “[I]n a meeting in St. Peter’s parish for the nomination of delegates to the State [Secession] Convention,” Youmans marveled, Cheves “spoke not of his illustrious father, nor [John C.] Calhoun, nor [George] McDuffie, nor [Robert Y.] Hayne,” all well-known states’ rights Carolinians. Instead, he “referred to and cited the words of Dr. Cooper as first having given that bent to his thought, which assured him of the soundness of his political views and the rectitude of his political principles, his devotion to which he afterwards sealed with his blood and his life.” An SCC graduate of 1833, Cheves, one of Cooper’s

protégés, honed a pro-Southern viewpoint on topics like slavery and secession at his professor's feet.⁵⁵⁶

Another member of the Class of 1852, Howard H. Caldwell, composed a poem entitled "We'll Stand by Carolina," foreshadowing alumni support for the Civil War. The verses neatly sum up the anxieties Cooper, Thornwell, and Preston suffered for South Carolina in their writings and speeches:

Shall we not love our mother [South Carolina]
And watch with careful eye
The movements of another [the Northern-led federal government]
Whose dark intents we spy?
What though her foes malign her, [abolitionists]
What though the world deride, [Europe and the North]
We'll stand by Carolina,
Whatever fate betide.

Here liberty has rested [the South as the true American republic]
And made her own abode,
As times past have attested,
The days of war and blood. [Southern independence dating back to 1776]
No tyrant may confine her, [the Northern-led federal government]
Our Joy, our Hope, our Pride!
We'll stand by Carolina, [secession and the Civil War]
Whatever fate betide.⁵⁵⁷

Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber created a strong sphere of influence in their SCC lecture rooms where they advocated the institution of slavery as well as the protection of South Carolina's economy and states' rights. Although Lieber historians ignore this point, the German-American perpetuated the college's proslavery atmosphere by revering Calhoun as a hero before his students, advocating college slave purchases,

⁵⁵⁶ Youmans, "The Historical Significance of the South Carolina College," in *Centennial Celebration of the South Carolina College*, 161-162.

⁵⁵⁷ Howard H. Caldwell, "We'll Stand by Carolina," quoted in Yates Snowden, "In the Days before the War," *The Centennial Celebration of the Granting of the Charter to South Carolina College*, 44-46.

and helping his students in establishing a Southern Rights' Association. Preston swayed students in favor of nullification and states' rights as a South Carolina representative in Columbia's State House, promoted slavery as a long-term SCC trustee, and developed the Athenaeum, a lecture hall and library that preserved Southern heritage. Thornwell fostered Southern ideals in his students by urging them not to punish college slaves, teaching states' rights doctrine and proslavery philosophy, and praising Calhoun. Of these four men, Thomas Cooper had the greatest influence upon SCC students. His proslavery lectures, published as popular political economy textbooks, as well as his essay *On the Constitution* (1826), indoctrinated future Southern leaders. These four professors' numerous students remained true to their college instruction in their future lives as state and regional leaders.

I. The Four Professors' Proslavery and States' Rights Influence on their Students

“The presidents of the college were men of commanding position in the State and most of them wielded powerful political influence,” Edwin Green declared in his 1916 college history. Green explained the heritage of Southern doctrine at the college, crediting Cooper with beginning the South Carolina nullification and anti-tariff agitation. “After Dr. Cooper freetrade was taught for the next twenty years by the distinguished publicist, Francis Lieber...William C. Preston [was a] politician...having served in the councils of the State and nation.” Although he never held office, “Dr. Thornwell was one of the best politicians of the time. So the college naturally became a school of politics, from which the students went out to practice their teachings.” In fact, “Many of the graduates of the State institution” appeared in “the House of Representatives within a short time after taking their degrees,” creating “a close corporation. They supported each

other...It was a vigorous organization, compact and bold.” Onlookers could do very little about this school-tie compact: “They ruled the House, and through that influenced the State. No measure they opposed could become law.” Numerous South Carolina representatives appear in the table of alumni who were students of the four professors featured here (see appendix one.)⁵⁵⁸

Others vouched for the professors’ influence, as well. At the 1905 centennial celebration, College of Charleston president Harrison Randolph called Cooper, Lieber, Thornwell, and Preston “famous teachers” who had formed “part of a common academic heritage” that South Carolina shared. He declared that their “work has helped to give character to the educational history of this State.” The students of the four professors, however, provide the most profound testimony to their remarkable influence. After examining the proslavery and other South Carolina doctrines the professors promoted, examples of alumni life follow.⁵⁵⁹

A. Francis Lieber

1) Lieber’s Dealings with College Servants

While Lieber’s proslavery instruction was not as blatant as Cooper’s, it aligns with his status as a “proslavery man,” to quote Charles Sumner. In his May 1844 trustees’ report, Lieber encouraged SCC to buy another slave for the faculty’s greater convenience. “[T]he two servants, now owned by the College are sickly, one of them is wholly unable to work, being very old, and suffering from an incurable malady,” the professor argued. “You will be pleased to decide whether we ought to purchase at least one servant. It is necessary to have an active college servant night and day within our walls, since not

⁵⁵⁸ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 312.

⁵⁵⁹ Harrison Randolph, “Response,” in *Centennial Celebration of South Carolina College*, 77.

infrequently menial labor must be performed at night, and, at present, the marshal is without any assistance on such occasions.” In an 1849 trustees’ report, Lieber repeated the same request.⁵⁶⁰

The German-American demonstrated concern about campus slave discipline. In an 1849 trustees report, he explained the “servant trouble” afoot at the college: “I have to report that the servants of the students, obliged to be at the Bursar’s hall during meal times, give the bursar and to the college in general much trouble. They are now hired by the students,” Lieber complained. “The Faculty think that a great improvement would be affected, if you would give them the right of turning the housing of all the servants over to the bursar, and would instruct the treasurer...to add one dollar per month to the student fees for the servants hire.” Lieber argued that, in his opinion, this unsatisfactory service should be improved: “We would thus obtain better servants and a greater discipline among them without any additional expence [sic] to the students.” In addition to witnessing Lieber’s interactions with the college slaves, the students would have been well aware of his example as master to his personal slaves.⁵⁶¹

2) Disciple of Cooper and Calhoun

Frank Friedel, Lieber’s biographer, argues that he did not influence his SCC students toward either Northern or Southern doctrines: “Although he was duly respectful toward the constitutional rights of the states, he developed strong arguments for nationalism in the classroom. His students remained ardent state-righters, but that was no fair gauge of failure...In noncontroversial fields the earnest theorist made a definite impression upon his students.” In contrast to Friedel’s assessment of Professor Lieber’s

⁵⁶⁰ Lieber, Trustees Report, May 1844, and Semi-Annual Report, May 1849, Lieber Papers, SCL.

⁵⁶¹ Lieber, “Semi-annual Report on the general State of S. Carolina College by the Acting President,” May 1849, Lieber Papers, SCL.

non-regional influence, this dissertation argues that he did, indeed, encourage his students to espouse Southern institutions and doctrines.⁵⁶²

The professor influenced his students toward Southern ideals in key ways. For instance, his selection of a required textbook further enhanced SCC's proslavery atmosphere. From 1835 to 1843, Lieber used Thomas Cooper's *A Manual of Political Economy* (1834) for instructing his own students on the subject. This work clearly supported slavery. In an 1837 Trustees' Report, Lieber stated, "In political economy I...use the small vol. of Dr. Cooper's as text-book." He only stopped using Cooper's text in 1843 when his own political economy textbook was published.⁵⁶³

A student of Lieber's, Leroy Youmans, later linked his professor's style of teaching political economy with that of Cooper. "The efforts of Cooper in the direction of free trade were ably continued by Francis Lieber," the prominent attorney remembered. "Lieber taught that there was a direct connection between civil liberty and free trade, and that, while protection is the first resort of nations when they rise to civil liberty, unshackled trade is the higher stage of experience and analyzing reflection." Youmans indicated that Lieber's teaching points supported the Southern view of the tariff, free trade, and Calhoun's concepts.⁵⁶⁴

Lieber's writings show that the professor placed Calhoun, quite literally, upon a pedestal before the eager young students. He included a description of his classroom in a letter to his niece Clara in 1854: "My lecture room is very fine. I have ornamented it with many busts." In addition to well-respected historical figures like Cicero, Homer, Shakespeare, and Washington, Lieber had also added the heroes of his new region. The

⁵⁶² Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 136.

⁵⁶³ Lieber, Trustees Report, May 10, 1837, Lieber Papers, SCL.

⁵⁶⁴ Youmans, "Historical Signification of South Carolina College," 163.

room contained not only the bust of George McDuffie, South Carolina governor and states' rights spokesman, but also that of Calhoun, renowned defender of slavery, states' rights, and nullification. LaBorde, a fellow professor, later mentioned that a bust of one "of the favorite public servants of Carolina, Preston," also appeared in Lieber's classroom.⁵⁶⁵

In one of his many transparent letters to his longtime correspondent George Hillard, Lieber partially admitted his Southern sympathies. The secession controversy was aflame at the time, much to Lieber's alarm. In his usual trenchant fashion, Lieber lamented that "when my country is in danger, I – live in South Carolina!" He further confessed, "I am a Pan-American; I *profess* it, I *teach* it, I *preach* it and of course I isolate myself [*italics mine.*]" Fearing Northern reprisals, Lieber conceded, "The time may come when I am styled a traitor."⁵⁶⁶

3) Southern Rights Association

Lieber also supported his students in their creation of a Southern Rights Association in 1851 and helped them compose their defiant statement of purpose. The students (and Lieber) declared their rationale, "We, the undersigned students of the South Carolina College, feeling deeply the insults that have been offered to the South, and knowing, as we do, that the spirit of the Constitution of these United States has been grossly violated, have associated ourselves for the purpose of forwarding, as far as we are able, the cause of Southern Rights." The association would have a president, officers, and regular meetings. A committee drew up a pamphlet, which they addressed "to the students in the Colleges and Universities, and to the Young Men, Throughout the

⁵⁶⁵ Lieber to Clara, July 1854, Lieber Papers, SCL; LaBorde, *History of the South Carolina College*, 425-431.

⁵⁶⁶ Lieber to George Hillard, Aug. 11, 1850, Lieber Papers, HEH.

Southern States.” Four thousand copies of the declaration their professor helped them compose were printed.⁵⁶⁷

The Euphradian Society, one of the two debating societies on campus, greatly admired Lieber and stated that he suited Carolina culture. In 1849, the society paid \$72 (over \$2,200 in 2016 dollars) for a painting of their professor from a prominent artist and also commissioned a bust of him. The young men registered shock and fury when news came from the North in 1860 of Lieber’s newly adopted abolitionist and Republican stance. Their reactions indicate that Lieber had openly promoted the elite antebellum Southern worldview during his time there.⁵⁶⁸

In fact, the Euphradians declared their own belief that Lieber had been one of them. In 1860, a meeting report read, “No one entertained a suspicion that his sentiments were adverse to our institutions; but, on the contrary, our confidence was sought and obtained by his ready and zealous espousal of our political principles, and by his avowing himself a disciple of Mr. Calhoun.” The surprising revelation continued: “The sincerity of his endorsement of slavery was further confirmed by the fact that he himself owned slaves in our midst, and also by his attaching his name to the Southern Rights Association, established in the South Carolina College in 1851 – a conspicuous instance of the zeal which he then professed.” This action of Lieber’s was all the more notable “since he was the only member of the Faculty who thought fit to take such a step. In view of these facts, the Euphradian Society...regarding Dr. Lieber as a staunch supporter of the institutions of the South, elected him to honorary membership, and gave his bust and portrait a place in her halls.” Shocked by his recent Republican

⁵⁶⁷ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 255; Friedel, *Nineteenth-Century Liberal*, 254.

⁵⁶⁸ Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 250-251; Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 268.

endorsements in the North, the Euphradians struck his name from their roster of honorary members. Lieber's defection so upset the young men that they threw his bust out of a window and returned the costly portrait to the artist. The society, betrayed, stated that Lieber did not say a word in defense of "Calhoun, whom once he professed to venerate, and whose doctrines he formerly advocated, and" also remained silent when "the Southern people, with whom he so long lived in honor and esteem, were vituperated and slandered." Lieber's erstwhile admiring students were disgusted by what was, to them, flagrant ingratitude on their former professor's part.⁵⁶⁹

B. William Campbell Preston

1) Columbia State House

Unlike Lieber, Preston served as a constant role model for SCC students throughout his entire adult life. He dynamically influenced students during the 1820s and early 1830s through powerful speeches at the Columbia State House. The young men continually assembled there to hear the political news and learn how to craft effective speeches of their own. Stephen Elliot wrote in 1859, "My tongue cannot express the charm which has always hung around the name of Preston, the charm to the young, the charm to the people, the charm to admiring senates." Preston's influence on his audience was palpable. Elliot remembered, "When he addressed the South Carolina legislature in 1830 on the subject of nullification" the students, congressmen, and anyone else who could be in attendance "listened with great fascination." In 1856, Thornwell told his students about a powerful oration of Preston's in 1830: "The class was intensely agitated

⁵⁶⁹ J.A. Wilson, President of Euphradian Society, and W.T. Charles, Secretary, "Meeting of the Euphradian Society," Oct. 25, 1860, newspaper name unknown, Lieber Papers, SCL.; Marion, *History of the Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies*, 45-46, recorded that the society threw Lieber's bust from the window and returned the portrait to the artist.

upon the question of the mode of resistance to the Tariff – and in 1830,” during his time as a SCC student, “our Euphradian orator [Preston] delivered a speech on the doctrine of nullification, to which the College, the House, and all who could get near enough to hear listened with an interest so breathless, that you could hear the beating of men’s hearts.” Preston’s impact upon Thornwell and his comrades was palpable: “We left the hall detesting the tariff – with the firm conviction that as for us we would nullify or die. There was the test of his eloquence, and he who can produce such effects is an Orator confessed.” Thornwell also affirmed this opinion in a letter to Preston: “[Y]ou have achieved for yourself a name which posterity will not willingly let die. All venerate you.”⁵⁷⁰

South Carolinians continued to respect Preston’s influence over the state, the region, and the nation. Long after his death in 1860, at the SCC centennial in 1905, a member of the class of 1889 vouched for the politician’s iconic status. “Preston – the popular idol, the powerful orator, the profound scholar,” William Barber remembered. Although Barber was not old enough to remember Preston personally, he had heard the Preston legends from older Columbians. He recalled “Bishop [Stephen] Elliott’s” declaration stating the significance of Preston’s influence to “the young, “the people,” and the “senates.”⁵⁷¹

While Preston was professor and president at SCC, he trained his protégés to be skilled politician-orators prepared to follow in his footsteps. Green noted, “Only...in the days of Preston’s presidency was stress laid upon [the art of public speaking], when he

⁵⁷⁰ Thornwell, “Semi-Centennial Oration before the Two Societies of the South Carolina College,” Dec. 1856, and Thornwell to Preston, Aug. 8, 1846, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

⁵⁷¹ William Barber, “Centennial Oration: Clariosophic Society,” in *The Centennial Celebration of South Carolina College*, 94.

performed the duties of professor of elocution, and his own example as one of the leading orators of the country fired the students to emulation.” In his circa 1940 unfinished Preston biography manuscript, Green more specifically states, “Under President Preston students devoted attention to the art of speaking, as at no later time.” The antebellum senator produced “men trained to lead in the trying days of [18]61 and [18]76.” Preston’s instruction, then, specifically prepared his students to lead South Carolina during secession, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.⁵⁷²

2) Years as SCC Trustee

Preston began serving and influencing SCC students long before he was formally employed there and continued in the role of trustee well after his retirement. An active trustee in the 1820s and early 1830s, he rarely missed a meeting and served on various committees. Preston researched alternate student boarding options, recommended dining hall changes, investigated the case of a drunken tutor, and initiated the custom of a student holiday from Dec. 25-Jan 1. More significantly, he served on a committee to purchase new college slaves. Board of Trustees minutes read from the late 1820s, “Gregg, Preston, and Elmore were appointed a committee to expend the sum appropriated for buying servants.” The Board ordered that “the sum of nine hundred dollars...be placed at the disposal of the committee of three, whose duty it shall be to purchase two negroes for use of the College and prescribe their duties.” In addition, the three trustees would “further recommend a like sum for the like purposes in the ensuing [ye]ar.” Preston and the two other committee members “purchased...a Carpenter, Henry for seven hundred dollars and...Jim for four hundred and fifty dollars,” well over the allotted sum.

⁵⁷² Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 29, and Preston Biographical Manuscript, Green Papers, SCL, 180.

Henry and Jim would be “sweeping rooms making beds attending on Proffs [sic] at recitations &c. The steward boards them in Commons for their sessions in waiting on Table.” Preston re-emphasized SCC’s endorsement of slavery by his act of purchasing Henry and Jim.⁵⁷³

3) The Athenaeum

Likewise, Preston helped shape SCC students, along with the Columbia citizenry, in his later years. After retiring from the college presidency, he organized and became president of the Columbia Athenaeum, a place of learning that included a library and lecture hall. “Preston’s “main purpose” in creating the Athenaeum, contemporary Maximilian LaBorde explained, was for “the benefit of the public,” particularly for “those who are too poor” to afford such cultural benefits. The former senator also hoped “to create a more wide-spread taste for knowledge” along with its “ennobling and elevating influences.” Donating his own library of “nearly three thousand volumes” to the Athenaeum, Preston’s “reading room” also offered American and European newspapers. The public could attend lectures free of charge. In an 1850s letter to his sister, Susanna McDowell, Preston confided his feeling of gratitude to Columbia for his political successes: “My Athenaeum which I intend as a legacy to the town for which I am indebted for many favors during the somewhat bustling period of my earlier life has the promise of being fairly launched.” Proslavery speaker Thornwell was one of the first persons Preston invited to lecture at his Athenaeum in 1852. The house of learning Preston created, in addition to various educational topics, instructed the Columbia public,

⁵⁷³ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Vol. 2, December 1827-December 1829, SCL.

as well as SCC students, in proslavery and other South Carolina doctrines during the decade before the Civil War.⁵⁷⁴

4) The Euphradian Society

During the last decade of Preston's life in the 1850s, the Euphradian Society provided significant proof of their admiration for and imitation of the former professor. As a college student, Preston had belonged to the society, and he was elected an honorary member when he returned to Columbia after his Senate career. Until his death, Preston frequently attended the society's meetings and exercises. In May 1860, the society "unanimously resolved that the members go in mourning to his funeral" and their "hall was also draped in mourning for the space of 30 days." The young men featured a tribute to their hero in the "Charleston and Columbia papers," stating that the society, "in the death of the Hon. William C. Preston has lost a friend, a patron, and a benefactor; one who has ever cherished an abiding interest in her welfare, whether surrounded by the bustle and turmoil of a political life, or...when disease and old age had bent his noble form." The society announced their plan "to contribute...to the erection of a monument." Concurring with Preston's ideas and planning to imitate his political and personal example, they desired "posterity [to know] the many excellencies of a son...whose brilliant achievements, noble character and more than filial affection have conferred an obligation upon her which she can only repay by emulating and perpetuating his virtues." The society gave the Preston Monument Association \$700, which constituted not only "the library proceeds for four years," but also a loan "from the fine art fund which indebtedness was to be refunded with interest, if necessary, in 1864." The Clariosophic

⁵⁷⁴ Preston to Susanna McDowell, [1853 or later], Smithfield-Preston Papers, VA Tech Library System; Preston to Thornwell, Dec. 4, 1852, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

Society, demonstrating their desire to memorialize Preston within South Carolina's history, pledged \$300 towards the Preston Monument. The Civil War and its outcome, however, put an end to the planned monument for a statesman who had encouraged Carolina's sons to fight against the North.⁵⁷⁵

C. James Henley Thornwell

1) States' Rights Influence

With the notable exception of Cooper, Thornwell evinced a stronger influence on the antebellum college than any other individual, influencing his students and the state at large on political matters, such as slavery and states' rights, in which he took a decidedly pro-Southern stance. Marion Sims, his classmate at SCC, remarked on his school friend's noted influence on the college and the state. Sims stated that he "became a power in the State politics, though he never held any political office; he was the head of the Theological Seminary; he was a power in the Presbyterian Church, and a great power outside of it." In addition to Thornwell's political and religious sway over South Carolina, "[h]is brilliant talents were given to...educate the youth of the State." In sum, Sims concluded, "he was a great man."⁵⁷⁶

In an 1850 chapel address, Thornwell eulogized the South Carolina states' rights champion, Calhoun, to the impressionable collegians. He called Calhoun "South Carolina's honoured son" as well as "one of America's distinguished statesmen," indeed, "a spirit endeared to us by many ties." The college chaplain enlarged his argument well past the person of Calhoun. "Never in the annals of our confederacy has there been a more critical period than this," he stated, using the word "confederacy" to indicate his

⁵⁷⁵ Marion, ed., *History of the Euphradian and Clariosophic Societies*, 27, 45.

⁵⁷⁶ Sims, *The Story of My Life*, 108-109.

belief that state power reigned supreme over federal power. “Never has the Senate of these United States been called to deliberate on questions so solemn and eventful, as those which were before it when our Senator received the mandate that his work was done.” Alerting the students to the sectional crisis, Thornwell stated, “To my mind nothing less than the problem of national existence is involved in the issues before the councils of our country. Shall this Union...be broken up – and the confederated States of this republic [sic] left to float upon the wide sea of political agitation and disorder?” Although Thornwell maintained that he loved the United States and preferred that it remain unified, he did not desire unity at the price of what he felt would be Southern abasement. He believed that Calhoun would have been able to obtain Southern protection without disunion.⁵⁷⁷

Thornwell warned his admiring and malleable audience that still more serious consequences awaited the South. He correctly deemed it impossible “that this confederacy can be dissolved without cruel, bloody, ferocious war, terminating in a hatred more intense than any which ever yet disgraced the annals of any people.” He prepared the future soldiers for the coming Civil War, which would occur in the short interval of eleven years. Thornwell alerted the students to the state of the western world, which he had witnessed while in Britain and France. “[I]n the present state of the world,” he declared, “the bottomless pit seems to have been opened...a false philosophy has impregnated the whole mass of the people abroad with absurd and extravagant notions of the very nature and organization of society and the true ends of government.” Thornwell had in mind the fomentations of abolitionism, capitalism, socialism, and communism

⁵⁷⁷ Thornwell, *Thoughts suited to the present crisis: a sermon on the occasion of the death of the Hon. John C. Calhoun* (Columbia, SC: The Students, 1850), 3-5.

which, in his opinion, were turning Europe into a frothy unstable mass. “[T]o suppose that amid this chaos of opinion, which has cursed the recent revolutions of Europe – we could enter upon the experiment of framing new constitutions without danger, is to arrogate a wisdom to ourselves to which...we are not entitled,” he declaimed. Thornwell solemnly declared, “I cannot disguise the conviction that the dissolution of this Union – as a political question – is the most momentous which can be proposed in the present condition of the world.” From the founding of the United States to the present, Thornwell explained, America’s republic had been “a *study* among the kingdoms of Europe,” but this example would no longer exist if secession occurred.⁵⁷⁸

Demonstrating a strong notion of republicanism and American exceptionalism, Thornwell said, “To say that this vast republic is, under God, the arbiter of the destinies of this whole continent, that it is for us to shape the character of all America – that our laws – our institutions – our manners, must tell upon the degenerate nations of the South, and sooner or later absorb the hardier son of the North.” He opined, “[W]e seem to hold the nations in our hands. With one arm on Europe and the other on Asia, it is for us to determine the political condition of the race for ages yet to come.” In addition to the goal of world republicanism, the spread of Christianity was “at stake,” Thornwell assured his youthful audience. “To Britain and America, Protestant Christianity looks for her surest friends, and her most zealous and persevering propagators.” If the “dissolution of the Union” occurred, however, “all our schemes of Christian benevolence and duty...must be suddenly and violently interrupted.” British Christians already scorned Southerners due to the institution of slavery, as Thornwell avowed in his writings (see chapter three.)⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ Thornwell, *Thoughts suited to the present crisis*, 5.

⁵⁷⁹ Thornwell, *Thoughts suited to the present crisis*, 6-7.

Thornwell made clear his opinion that Calhoun could have ably guided and protected South Carolina while still averting the crisis of civil war, but without his leadership, Thornwell felt extremely unsure of the state and the nation's destiny. Calhoun "was precisely the individual to whom, in such a crisis, his own State would have cheerfully confided her destiny." Thornwell lavishly praised the late politician to his listening students: "With an understanding distinguished for perspicacity – a firmness equal to any emergency – a perseverance absolutely indomitable – with a masterly intellect and a true and faithful heart, the South looked to him for defence [sic], for protection, for guidance." Thornwell asked rhetorically, "Why at this time is his voice stilled in death... Why, when the highest of all sublunary interests was at stake, was one of our purest and brightest Statesmen refused permission to continue in the conflict?"⁵⁸⁰

The SCC chaplain reinforced his own profusely positive assessment of Calhoun with examples of South Carolina's responses to the senator's death. It "has hung our own Commonwealth in mourning – has struck the nation with awe – has roused the attention of all classes in the community and has elicited publick [sic] expressions of sorrow and lamentation from societies, clubs, schools, colleges, districts, towns, cities and legislative assemblies," encouraging the young men to lament Calhoun's loss. Thornwell mentioned national regret: "This spontaneous expression of grief – every where – from all parties – from every portion of the land – from the pulpit and the press – the intense interest the death of our illustrious Senator has excited," proved, to him, the paramount importance and sheer calamity of the event. In the spirit of a chapel service, he remarked, "We may

⁵⁸⁰ Thornwell, *Thoughts suited to the present crisis*, 7-8.

have relied more upon his power of argument – his energy of persuasion – his integrity of character – his public and private influence, than upon the secret operations of God.⁵⁸¹

The young men demonstrated their agreement with their chaplain's impassioned message. The Clariosophic Society collected money to build a "memorial better suited to his exalted worth" over Calhoun's grave. In addition, the society issued a call to all young men of South Carolina to contribute.⁵⁸²

2) College slaves

In addition to supporting the South Carolina doctrine of states' rights, Thornwell also strongly promoted his creed of paternalistic slave treatment during his years as college professor and president. "There are two evils harder to reach than any other subject connected with the discipline of the College," Thornwell confided in an 1852 trustees' report. "One is the treatment of servants. This is a matter of peculiar delicacy. The young men sometimes allow themselves to become irritated and inflict chastisements which are anything but judicious. The Faculty, in most cases, have nothing to go upon but the complaints of the servants themselves." Despite Thornwell's concerns, South Carolina law and tradition did not allow slave testimony to stand against white persons. "To impress these servants with the conviction that they are exempt from all direct responsibility to the young men is to give them a license for idleness – to let the students punish them is to subject them to occasional cruelty," the professor lamented. "It is, accordingly, a very difficult thing to manage. I have endeavored to enforce the rule that a student shall strike a servant only for insolence and that idleness and inattention shall be made matters of complaint to the Bursar." Although college rule permitted students to

⁵⁸¹ Thornwell, *Thoughts suited to the present crisis*, 11, 32.

⁵⁸² Marion, *History of the Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies*, 26-27.

strike a slave for insubordination, Thornwell's paternalistic philosophy taught that God would judge those who abused their slaves. "But I must confess that I have only partially succeeded. The evil has been mitigated, but not removed," Thornwell wrote regretfully.⁵⁸³

Thornwell's attitude is in line with other religious college leaders of his day. Jennifer Oast notes that slave abuse was significantly curtailed at two religious colleges in Virginia. "The Presbyterian faith of the faculty and of students themselves [at Hampden-Sydney] appears to have made violence less likely than at the College of William and Mary or the University of Virginia [both comparable to SCC]." At Hollins Institute, for example, "[A] faithful Baptist, President Charles Cocke[,] showed concern for the well-being of the slaves under his care, and especially for keeping family members together." These attitudes were quite similar to the Presbyterian minister and paternalist Thornwell. At both secular and religious colleges, to varying degrees, Oast remarks, "The faculty frequently tried to protect the slaves [from the students] with regulations, but they could not or chose not to stem the violence against slaves entirely."⁵⁸⁴

3) Influence through Students' Reading Material

Even if Thornwell did not succeed in eliminating student abuse of slaves from SCC, he certainly succeeded in shaping students' beliefs. One of Thornwell's former students, Thomas Neil, wrote from his home in Mississippi in 1847 stating that he had convinced an acquaintance to subscribe to the *Southern Presbyterian Review*; Thornwell was a frequent contributor. Neil praised certain articles of Thornwell's, evincing an

⁵⁸³ Thornwell, Trustees' Report, May 4, 1852, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

⁵⁸⁴ Oast, *Institutional Slavery*, 201.

extremely high regard for his former professor's opinions. He avowed, "I make no doubt I shall be able to increase your Subscription List." Showing gratitude toward Thornwell, he wrote in closing, "Permit me to return you my heartfelt thanks for the great benefits you have conferred upon me during an intercourse of five years." He signed himself "Your sincere Friend and much-attached pupil."⁵⁸⁵

Thornwell contributed reading material to his former society, as well. Harry Hammond, J.H. Hudson, and Samuel Melton, SCC students destined for influential careers in the Civil War and Reconstruction, sent Thornwell a letter of thanks on behalf of their society "for the copy of Calhoun's works with which you presented it." The young men continued, "We appreciate the kindness which prompted the bestowal of this valuable book and hail it as an indication of your abiding interest in the welfare of our Society."⁵⁸⁶

4) Teachings on Slavery

During the 1854-1855 school year, a student named W. Hutson Wigg kept a notebook of important lectures, including one entitled "Slavery" by Thornwell. Teaching the students his own monogenetic creationist view, Thornwell stated, "We admit the unity of the human race and consequently that the negro is of the same physical, intellectual and moral class as ourselves." Presenting a biblical defense of slavery in face of the questions posited in other parts of the world, the professor asserted, "The letter of the Scriptures plainly sanctions all, but as some plausible objections have been raised against the present force of that toleration, we must inquire into the spirit of the law." Thornwell warned that many Christian abolitionists held incorrect opinions that were

⁵⁸⁵ Thomas B. Neil to Thornwell, Aberdeen, Mississippi, Oct. 22, 1847, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

⁵⁸⁶ Harry Hammond, J.H. Hudson, and Samuel Melton to Thornwell, Oct. 22, 1852, Thornwell Papers, SCL.

contrary to the Scriptures: “[T]hey who...are opposed to the genius and temper of slavery, are led to hold in reference to this subject [certain] opinions which they would abhor in all others.” On the subject of slavery, “[c]onfusion arises from a two fold apprehension, one in relation to the nature of slavery tolerated in the letter of scriptures and another in relation to the Spirit of Christianity itself.” The professor would proceed to argue against what were, to him, faulty premises in order to persuade his students.⁵⁸⁷

Citing well-known abolitionist philosophers, he stated that the Northerner “[William Ellery] Channing and [British philosopher William] Whewell, with most others consider slavery as an annihilation of all human and personal rights as the absorption of the humanity of our individual into the will and power of another. According to Channing the essential principle of slavery is that it dehumanizes the slave.” Channing argued that this was the case even in the best of master-slave relationships: “Whatever be the contingent circumstances of the system, that effect is produced, necessarily and systematically from its nature. According to Whewell the slave is converted from a man into a thing, with him the will of his master is in the place of the supreme role of humanity. He then argues that in every case the slave is divested of his moral nature...he then concludes that such a state is a violation of the fundamental principles of justice and humanity.” Wigg made a note: “Dr. T. denies that slavery is such a state...He then proceeds to show that it is a recognized relation of man[,] human since it is a form of civil society of which persons not things are the elements.”⁵⁸⁸

In his classroom, Thornwell argued that, despite the abolitionists’ contention, a person’s “conscience, will and understanding” could not be absorbed “into the

⁵⁸⁷ Thornwell, “Slavery,” in W. Hutson Wigg Notebook, 1854-1855, SCL.

⁵⁸⁸ Thornwell, “Slavery,” Wigg Notebook.

personality of another.” However, “the whole argument against slavery” rested upon this premise. “It is contended, that the soul can not be sold and bartered, the conscience cannot be transferred to another, that moral responsibility cannot be shifted from one to another or be divided.” Since these premises were obvious, “it is taken for granted that these are the effects of slavery.” Thornwell then cited the Bible as an authority in his proslavery lecture. “Even as slavery existed in the time of the Apostles, it was not considered as merging the personality of the slave in the proprietorship of the master,” he challenged abolitionists Channing and Whewell. “They [the Apostles] inculcated that [since a slave was] a man he was possessed of certain rights and as to a man they inculcated obedience as a duty.” The professor continued, “Obedience necessarily implies rationality, intelligence and responsibility in the agent...it implies moral obligation and sense of duty. The Apostle treats slaves as possessing conscience, reason and will,” elements of personhood.⁵⁸⁹

Extending the relation further to a component of natural hierarchy, Thornwell contested, “Paul considered slavery as a social and political economy in which there were reciprocal relations between moral, intelligent and responsible beings.” The professor then turned to the question of proper slave treatment before his student audience. “Of course [since] it was liable to abuse upon either side, morality and religion should preserve the balance and enforce justice and fidelity upon each,” he reasoned. The abolitionists’ belief that “[t]he property of man in man is a fallacy in terms” did not apply to slavery, in Thornwell’s opinion, because one human merely owned another human’s labor, not the body or soul of that person. “The limbs and members of a slave is not the property of the master, but of himself.” Instructing the future masters against slave abuse,

⁵⁸⁹ Thornwell, “Slavery,” Wigg Notebook.

Thornwell explained, “[T]hey are not tools and instruments, which the master may sport with at his pleasure, but the sacred possession of the human being which cannot be invaded without the authority of law and for the proper use of which he is responsible to God.”⁵⁹⁰

Thus upholding paternalistic slave care, Thornwell then posited, “Slavery then is not inconsistent with the existence of personal rights or moral obligations.” Since “a masters right is not to the man but to the labor, the duty of the slave is correspondent to this right.” Thornwell then exposed the labor conditions in Europe and the North that he had concluded were far worse than those of enslaved labor. “Free labor is surrendered in consequence of a contract, slave labor of a command but the intervention of a contract is not always a security to freedom of choice,” the professor remembered. Necessity often forced the free worker to accept an unfair contract: “The force[s] of circumstances are often more stringent upon the free laborer and determines more sternly the contract that he makes, than the dependence of the slave does the nature of the service.” Even in cases of sale or punishment, Thornwell believed, the personhood of the slave was maintained to the same degree of the free worker. “The rights of a master over the freedom or person of the slave is only subsidiary...to the right to his labor. He does not sell the man but the property in his service. The slave is punished upon the same principle of the free laborer for breach of contract.”⁵⁹¹

Thornwell drove home his points in his conclusion. “If the slave is not divested of personality, if he is not stripped of his humanity, but he has his rights acknowledged and provision made for the maintenance of these rights, there is no inherent deficiency in the

⁵⁹⁰ Thornwell, “Slavery,” Wigg Notebook.

⁵⁹¹ Thornwell, “Slavery,” Wigg Notebook.

system such as Channing and others charge,” he declared. “Its essential characteristics do not depend upon the adequacy or inadequacy of that provision.” Using long-accepted cases of social subordinates as examples, he stated, “That the obligation to labor for the benefit of another and by his will is not inconsistent with the rights of man is shown in the case of children, apprentices and criminals.” The minister believed that the only true soul-slavery was that of a human being to sin, and all humans could accept God’s forgiveness and be emancipated, including slaves. “There is a moral bondage more galling than any social, which man can neither impose nor remove and from this slavery may be and is often more free than the proudest monarch. The freedom...is entirely within the reach of the slave.” Thornwell argued that “in asserting his claim to it he establishes his...personality and his humanity.” This statement dovetailed with Thornwell’s religious training of his own slaves, and he encouraged his students to provide Christian training for their slaves. Thornwell’s student, Hutson Wigg, used careful penmanship in copying the lecture and brought his notebook containing a few special college lectures home to preserve and refer to in later years.⁵⁹²

D. Thomas Cooper

Despite the enormous influence Thornwell evinced over his students’ proslavery and states’ rights thought, Cooper undeniably held the greatest sway over the antebellum students. His classroom lectures and his two textbooks, *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826) and *Manual of the Elements of Political Economy* (1833), clearly stated his views of paternalistic slavery and states’ rights philosophy, all buttressed by the professor’s mantra of avoiding Britain’s negative example. His presidential speeches to the college echoed these themes. Cooper’s interactions with his own slaves (see chapter two) and

⁵⁹² Thornwell, “Slavery,” Wigg Notebook.

especially with the college slaves were visible to his admiring students. The professor of political economy greatly influenced specific students who became noted Southern leaders.

A few historians in the past attest to Cooper's political impact on his students. No source, however, mentions the British and Continental influences on Cooper's thought that, through him, strongly influenced the course of state and national history. In *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, Dumas Malone corroborates Cooper's role in fomenting the Civil War, relating the testimonies of contemporaries who credited Cooper with turning South Carolina toward secessionist doctrine. In 1830, an anonymous Unionist author, for example, complained of Cooper in the *Courier*, stating that he "has had the daring effrontery to tell us, 'it was time to calculate the value of our Union,' and yet he is permitted to enjoy a salary of three thousand dollars, for the purpose of rendering our sons and brothers disaffected toward our Union." Sensing the trouble ahead, the author declared, "He was not employed to come among us and sow the seeds of discord and disunion." Joel R. Poinsett, a Unionist politician from South Carolina, expressed similar concerns. Poinsett "stated that upon his arrival in Columbia in October, 1830, he found the public mind poisoned by the utterances of the South Carolina statesmen in Washington, 'and by the pernicious doctrines of the president of the college Dr. Cooper, whose talents and great acquirements give weight to his perverse principles, and make him doubly dangerous.'" Contemporaries, then, voted Cooper a significant force in South Carolina politics.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹³ Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839*, 282-283. The article by the anonymous Unionist author and the letter from Joel Roberts Poinsett to Andrew Jackson were featured in the *Courier*, Sept. 7, 1830 and Oct. 1830, respectively, in Malone, *Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 334-335.

Kenneth Platte, in his 1967 discussion of Cooper as an educator, confirms the professor's importance to the college and the state. Asserting that "Cooper initiated lectures in political economy" in 1823, he contends that these lectures wielded "significant influence upon the thought of the future political leaders of South Carolina." Specifically, Cooper's "teachings on state sovereignty, laissez-faire, fraud and force molded the political and economic thought of the young men of the State." In fact, "South Carolina College became the center of political as well as educational thought in its state to a degree unequaled by any other state institution in the South." The professor expounded his ideas to a larger group than just his classroom, Platte declares: "Cooper's lectures were...also [open] to the general public. They created an interest in political matters ...He was often called upon to speak to public gatherings and he utilized these opportunities to broadcast his political ideas." Some individuals expressed concern "that boys were being reared to become professional politicians" at the college, as was, indeed, the case.⁵⁹⁴

Cooper was well aware of the potential power of his position as tutor, advisor, and influencer of the young Carolina elite. For example, the professor included a short dedication at the beginning of a pamphlet on "the labours of a convention" (1832.) "It is the respectful offering of a Nullifier, willing to contribute his mite of information, to those who will by and by wield the destinies of this glorious little State; and who will not permit its bold and strait forward course to be turned aside, or its honor to be tarnished." In the preface of *On the Foundation of Civil Government and On the Constitution* (1826), Cooper stated "that it would be useful and interesting to the Students of the South-

⁵⁹⁴ Platte, "The Religious, Political, and Educational Aspects of the Thomas Cooper Controversy," 6, 12-13.

Carolina College, to have some clear and distinct notions of the subjects treated in these two Essays.” Slavery and states’ rights were two of the ideas that Cooper expounded upon in detail in the work.⁵⁹⁵

1) Cooper’s Involvement with Campus Slaves

In addition to influencing SCC students through his writings, Cooper also affected their future behavior through his example. The only recorded instance in which Cooper considered punishing a slave occurred at SCC. In an 1821 trustees’ report, Cooper complained of a college servant and asked permission to deal with the issues at hand. “I consider the negro man Jacko, attached to the chemical department, as idle, careless, void of veracity, and of honesty. He considers himself rather as the Servant of the Students than of the Trustees; and in that respect a dangerous person to be employed in College, from whence he should be banished.” Cooper mentioned that his colleagues concurred with his opinion of Jacko: “Aware of his tale-bearing propensity, the Faculty are compelled to adopt an anxious caution in employing him at their meetings.” Cooper even accused Jacko of sedition: “[I]f the last Insurrection did not succeed, it was not for want of this man’s endeavoring to aid it; if I am rightly informed.”⁵⁹⁶

It appears probable that Cooper was so enraged that he hoped the trustees would sell Jacko, but assumed they would not, as he included another plan. He continued in a frustrated vein, “The Servant of the Trustees, ought not to be permitted to earn any money in the employ of the students: he should have no motives of action, subject to their

⁵⁹⁵ Cooper, *Hints, suggestions, and contributions to the labours of a convention* (Columbia, SC: The Telescope Office, 1832), 1; Cooper, *Two Essays [On the Constitution]*. In the course of his writings, he decided they were “improper to be delivered from a Professor’s chair” because he had taken decided opinions on debatable issues. Instead, he dedicated them “to the world.” The irony in this is that Cooper’s students, past, present, and future, were very much a part of that world, and read them and were duly influenced despite not hearing their concepts in a classroom. This avowal is, in fact, laughable considering the preponderance of opposite evidence.

⁵⁹⁶ Cooper, Trustees’ Report, April 22, 1821, Cooper Papers, SCL.

controul. He should have one master practically...the Chemical Professor.” Cooper held that office himself, and argued that he “should be responsible for the performance of all the duties assigned to the Servant, in the building where the laboratory, Library, and Mathematical Lecture rooms are situated.” He requested, “[A]s to the present slave Jacko, I request to know whether I may direct reasonable punishment when I think it would be of service? Hitherto he has received none; and I am persuaded he is the worse for the lenity shown him.” If, or in what way, Cooper punished Jacko remains unknown, but the student body would have been well aware of the situation.⁵⁹⁷

One of Cooper’s students, Basil Manly, became president of the University of Alabama. An 1844 account remains of his cruelly whipping a college slave who rebelled. At first, Manly was concerned that a few of the Alabama students had punished a slave, Augustus, too harshly, but when Augustus refused to obey a command of one of the students, “[b]y order of the Faculty he was chastised, in my room, in their presence. Not seeming humbled, I whipped him a second time, very severely.” Manly had, indeed, applied paternalism’s punishment aspect to the college slave under his care, as had Cooper.⁵⁹⁸

In 1824, as president of SCC, Cooper requested that the trustees acquire another slave for his personal convenience. “Dr. Maxcy [the former president] was allowed a Servant. Hitherto I have not claimed this accustomed privilege.” He then complained, “But no day in Session has passed since I have performed the duties of President in which my own servant [his valet Sancho] has not been more or less employed in College business.” He urged, “I beg of the Trustees to hire annually a servant, one half of his time

⁵⁹⁷ Cooper, Trustees’ Report, April 22, 1821, Cooper Papers, SCL.

⁵⁹⁸ Diary of Basil Manly II, Jan. 19 and 25, 1844, Manly Family Papers, University of Alabama, in Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 50.

to be devoted to the Laboratory, and the other part to myself, I finding him in provisions.” Although the trustees later turned down his request, the incident demonstrated that Cooper had no qualms about increasing the college’s commitment to slavery for his own benefit.⁵⁹⁹

2) Cooper’s Pro-Southern Teachings

Greatly swaying his students’ thinking about slavery and other Carolina doctrines, Cooper had an extraordinarily enormous influence on the students through his first textbook, *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826), noting in the preface, “I delivered the following course of lectures.” This classroom instruction was preserved in textbook form for the indoctrination of many others. Cooper felt that training in political economy was necessary: “[O]ur Legislature contains so many gentlemen brought up at this Institution, and is so likely in future to be in the same situation, that a young man going from this College, without some elementary notions relating to this modern branch of knowledge, would be but ill prepared for the duties, which some years hence he may be called upon to undertake.” The professor confessed his full awareness of the special influence he wielded over South Carolina’s political future.⁶⁰⁰

By using numerous negative examples of Britain’s social and economic negligence, he instructed his classes of future politicians to avoid Britain’s example. “In this country,” he lamented, “we imitate every thing too much that is English.” Noting Northern imitation of Britain, he encouraged the young men to avoid Northern governmental control at all costs when they had the power to do so. Cooper used his

⁵⁹⁹ Cooper, Trustees’ Report, April 1824, Cooper Papers, SCL.

⁶⁰⁰ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy* (Columbia, SC: Printed by D.E. Sweeny, 1826), Preface. O’Brien attests to the enormous popularity of Cooper’s textbook in the South in *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 2, 843.

favorite scapegoat to explain the damage of monopoly and manufacture: “[T]he introduction of foreign grain is prohibited in England, while wheat continues at ten shillings sterling, per bushel. It is manifest that this is a contrivance on [the] part of the land holders and government, to enable the former to pay his rent and his taxes, by laying them on the consumer; particularly on the poor.” He predicted future revolt against this tyranny: “But the day is fast approaching, when the rich manufacturers, the commercial class, and the starving poor, joined by all salaried officers and annuitants, will call for a repeal of the corn laws, in a tone that cannot be resisted.”⁶⁰¹

By its own hand, he claimed, Britain had placed itself in jeopardy: the “increase of taxes: the want of demand for labour, brought on a reduction of wages, and an enormous encrease [sic] of poor from so many persons being thrown out of employ...so oppressive, as of itself to detract prodigiously from the farmer’s ability to answer the demands upon him.” From personal knowledge, he further informed his young audience: “In that country, a farmer must not only pay rent, but taxes, poor rates, and tythes [which] weigh heavily on the middling and lower classes of that kingdom.” Cooper taught a pointed lesson for the next generation of Southern leaders: if they submitted to the Northern tariff, they would find themselves in the same situation as the British working classes. First, the region would lose its income; second, its food as the agricultural emphasis dwindled; and last, the South would lose its freedom and republican rights.⁶⁰²

Cooper then warned the young men about British manufacturing, which he painted in terms of a giant monster: “The manufacturing system is liable to dreadful periods of misery and starvation for want of employment. The accounts from Lancashire

⁶⁰¹ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 85-86.

⁶⁰² Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 85-86, 134.

and other parts of England...are equal to periodical famines,” the Englishman remembered. “The wealth thus obtained by capitalists, is very dearly bought. Two hundred thousand people in Lancashire...crying out for food; twenty thousand in Dublin alone; many in Glasgow and other parts of the United Kingdoms, form a melancholy commentary of manufacturing prosperity.”⁶⁰³

He carefully explained to his students the causes of these British woes and encouraged them to prevent similar situations in the South. The future legislators and planters must protect agriculture, the Southern economic foundation. “Such is the healthy state of all new countries where good land is abundant and cheap, and labour is in constant demand. Such is the state of this country, where the miseries of the poor in the old countries of Europe are unknown.” Citing what he viewed as the negative example of the North, where the old European ways were slowly but surely being implemented, he lectured, “[O]ur great cities will gradually put on the character of old and long settled countries; and the truths applicable to the one [Europe] will apply to the other [the North and, if proper steps were not taken, the South].” Southerners, he exhorted, must rise up and protect themselves and their enslaved working class from this impending doom.⁶⁰⁴

Passing on his classical republican beliefs, the professor illustrated the danger of manufactures to those who depended on its “demand and supply” for their support. Remembering an example from his years as a British citizen, he recounted, “About forty years ago [c. 1786], ribbands for shoe-ties, began to supersede the use of shoe buckles, which have been gradually driven out of the market, not being able to produce half their prime cost; in fact, not being saleable. The demand has ceased.” He continued his

⁶⁰³ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 89, 91, 93-94.

⁶⁰⁴ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 89, 91, 93-94.

cautionary tale: “If a man had a million pairs of buckles that cost a million of dollars, they would be of no value, for they would not be saleable or exchangeable till converted into some saleable form, and destroyed as buckles.” Both the manufacturer and his employees, due to the change in fashion, lost their means of livelihood.⁶⁰⁵

By contrast, he explained, “This can never happen to an agricultural establishment. A field of twenty acres,” valuable in the early 1800s, “will be of the same use three centuries hence,” Cooper assured the young men. In contrast to the factory environment, “[t]he employments of agriculture are healthy, and invigorating. They bring up a robust and hardy peasantry. Not so in manufactures: a system in England very hurtful to the body and to the mind.” Certainly, “no friend to his country would wish to see introduced in these United States...the system prevalent in Great Britain.” His points, he declared, came straight from his firsthand knowledge: “All this is so abundantly manifested in Great Britain, that it requires no amplification to those who have visited and well observed that country.”⁶⁰⁶

Cooper described the misery of Ireland so that the future legislators could avoid such a situation in their state. “[T]here is not a country upon earth so overwhelmed with a needy population seeking employment as Ireland.” Death by starvation, he explained, was “a process continually...taking place in England, and Ireland.” Cooper admitted, “Perfect equality is neither attainable nor desirable; but in Europe, the inequality in the distribution of the fruits of industry is far too great. A class of men rich beyond all means of enjoyment, look down on another class starving from want of necessaries, neither through illness or crime.” Cooper explained that a worker’s “wages do little more than

⁶⁰⁵ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 65-66.

⁶⁰⁶ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 119, 121.

furnish them and their families with food from day to day in a country such as England. A week's want, will bring them on the parish."⁶⁰⁷

He connected his worries over the federal tariff increase with his fear that the South would share Britain's fate: "Taxes on the necessities of life are usually productive, but they invariably fall on the poor most heavily." Wages should "afford reasonable subsistence to the labourer," but "the fact is not so; how many of the poor have actually starved in England?" There was no need for an answer; the students knew it was a large number. Taxation contributed to starvation, along with insufficient wages: "Hence the malt tax [on beer], the taxes on salt, sugar, candles, soap, leather, low priced woolens and cottons, and such articles as the poor are compelled to buy, are not justifiable in England, nor prudent any where."⁶⁰⁸

Cooper pointed out to his students that Northern poverty rates were expanding in imitation of Britain. The professor worried, "The subject has become of a magnitude so alarming, that it has been taken up in Massachusetts, New-York, and Pennsylvania." He included a chart, which revealed the current "pauper" rates in the Northern states. Of the poor rates, Cooper declared, "In England they have been as high as forty million of dollars in one year. In Philadelphia, they are proceeding at a similar rate." Cooper compared Pennsylvania and England, in which he had formerly resided. "In this country...it is indeed alarming to find the increase of pauperism progressing with such rapidity," he lamented. "[O]ur citizens are in all probability on the verge of becoming extensively engaged in manufactures; and the example of England may teach us that it is on a manufacturing population, that the poor laws operate most deleteriously and fatally."

⁶⁰⁷ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 124, 182, 184, 236.

⁶⁰⁸ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 223, 267.

The author urged the soon-to-be Southern politicians to change the course before it was too late.⁶⁰⁹

In the process of molding his students' minds, Cooper further condemned Northern activities. Praising Adam Smith's concept of "leaving individuals to pursue their interest in their own way," he then exclaimed, "What a contrast to these doctrines, are the notions that prevailed in the Congress of 1824-5, and dictated the disgraceful act called the Tariff Law!" Cooper declared it ridiculous "[t]hat statesmen and legislators know better how to direct the various branches of industry, and the employment of capital, than the individuals who draw their inheritance from employing it to the most advantage." The professor specifically indicted Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams as primary actors in what he saw as blatant interference. He advised the future planter-politicians to beware: "[F]or this laudable purpose, the purse of a planter may fairly be emptied into the pocket of a manufacturer."⁶¹⁰

Cooper deplored the North's imitation of Britain in reference to tariff implementation that prohibited foreign trade. Northern manufacturers wanted to gain income by forcing Southerners to buy their products, just as British manufacturers had forced their countrymen to purchase from them through restrictive monopolies, laws, and tariffs. He complained furiously of the North, "The restrictive system tells us...that it is our duty to let our domestic neighbors grown rich on our credulity, and persuade [sic] us to buy from him an inferior article at a higher price. This is the principle adopted, and in fact acted upon by the promoters of the tariff law, and sanctioned by the present administration." Cooper taught that this "principle, which the same selfish motives and

⁶⁰⁹ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 251-254.

⁶¹⁰ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 9, 16-17, 22.

want of knowledge, will gradually extend if possible, till our shipping be laid up to rot in our ports.” This declaration incited the young Southerners to fight against potential Northern economic domination.⁶¹¹

Cooper cautioned the future lawmakers in his lecture hall that the federal government was already encroaching upon South Carolina’s state power and must be stopped from taking more privileges away from them. “I greatly doubt the constitutional powers at present claimed by and conceded to the general government of the Union, to take part in any such undertakings.” In fact, Cooper argued, “[t]he power and patronage of the general government already threaten the liberties of the country.” Programming the future politicians to resist Northern measures, he continued, “The acquiescence of the state governments in these insidious measures, bribed to approve of them by the money proposed to be expended in the state, and taken out of the national treasury, seems to me like Esau’s selling his birth-right for a mess of pottage.”⁶¹²

In his work *On the Constitution* (1826), also derived from classroom lectures, Cooper primed his students for the future fomentation of secession in which very nearly all of them would participate. Written first with his students in mind but later dedicated to “the world,” the essay constructed the history of the United States according to Cooper’s Southern antebellum viewpoint. The first Conventions of the 1770s met as state representatives, not as “the United States” or “the People,” the professor emphasized, and the Constitution itself was ratified separately by each state. Cooper further explained, “This notion that the People framed the Constitution, has been urged from the time of General Hamilton [1791] to the present time, to keep out of view the agency of separate,

⁶¹¹ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 170.

⁶¹² Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 289.

sovereign and independent states, meeting and contracting for common purposes such as the delegates of those States have delineated in...the Constitution.” Cooper felt that Jefferson and Madison had explained why Adams’ and Hamilton’s concepts were incorrect in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, but that the opposing party continued to fight against what was, to him, the obvious truth. British influence had, he insisted, worsened the situation. John Adams, an Anglophile, had passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, and fifteen years later, New England, out of their respect for Britain, had been remiss in fighting the War of 1812. “[I]n Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island,” for example, the orders to assemble the militia to fight “were so obeyed as to throw as much obstacle as possible in the way of the national efforts against the common enemy.” The Governor of Connecticut, for instance, had used its troops “as a check on the army of the United States.” Cooper remarked dryly that if the governor “had been hired and paid by Great Britain, he could not have served their cause more boldly.”⁶¹³

In the early 1820s, “the President Mr. John Q. Adams” had demonstrated his belief “that no reference to the people is necessary for an amendment to enable the federal authorities to carry into effect any measure whatever that has the ‘general welfare’ for its end and purpose.” This line of legislation “implies despotic power,” Cooper assessed. Worse still, “this mode of reasoning...has proved the most plausible argument for the worst features of [E]uropean despotism political and ecclesiastical.” He challenged the young men to action against what he labeled British-style tyranny: “It is high time to reject a doctrine, which has served...to perpetuate fraud...and to cajole the people into the great value of ignorance.” Cooper named the rights of the federal

⁶¹³ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, iii, 22-24, 27-30, 41.

government as designated by the constitution, and avowed that the tariff law was outside these categories.⁶¹⁴

By spreading the right of slavery to Western states, in opposition to Northern wishes, “the condition of slaves would be improved, and the condition of the whites rendered more secure, in proportion as our slave population was distributed among a greater extent of population [and] territory.” The need for slave care – paternalism – and the desire to avoid revolt figured in this statement. Cooper deplored the fact that the federal government had proffered objections “to the admission of Missouri, inasmuch as the situation and interest of all the Southern States must of necessity compel them to be guided by the considerations now urged, at all hazards.”⁶¹⁵

3) Cooper’s Proslavery Teachings

Cooper taught his students that, in addition to fighting the North to keep state liberties intact, the next generation of Southern politicians must also care for their slaves, thereby keeping the slave system afloat. In contradiction to British manufacturers’ indifference, Cooper also encouraged the future plantation owners to support paternalistic slavery, the element that, in his opinion, made the South truly great. In a lecture on law presented first to Columbia’s law students, and afterwards in the South Carolina Senate, Cooper taught the supremacy of the peculiar institution. Quite early in society, “the relations of owner and slave, and master and servant” had originated. Having so established these relations, he buttressed their importance by quoting regulations between lords and serfs in the Laws of King Alfred. “Here, then, to go no further, are the foundations of a whole system of Ethics, to [form] the more regular enactments of

⁶¹⁴ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, 27-30, 32.

⁶¹⁵ Cooper, *On the Constitution*, 47.

positive Law...the obligations to peaceable conduct – the protection of persons and of property – the duties and obligations of husband and wife – parent and child – master and servant.” Cooper, then, placed slavery as one of the era’s core social relations that, as usual, required obedience to the male.⁶¹⁶

Although truly paternalistic slavery proved more expensive than free labor, Cooper explained, they should, nonetheless, espouse it as the better system. This section of *Lectures on Political Economy*, interestingly enough, was juxtaposed to a section on the starving poor in Britain and Europe, who, Cooper declared, had been fleeced by the manufacturing economy. “Of all kinds of labour, task-work is the fairest, and the most profitable both to the workman and the employer: nor ought any laborer to be employed by the day, when he can be employed by the piece.” This indicates that Cooper favored the task system over the gang-labor system, not surprising since the task system was considered more paternalistic. “Slave labour is undoubtedly the dearest kind of labour: it is all forced...from a class of human beings, who of all others, have the least propensity to voluntary labour.” The racist professor held to the pseudoscientific theory of African biological inferiority and passed it along to his students.⁶¹⁷

Lecturing on proper slave maintenance, Cooper emphasized the importance of budgeting for the paternalist master. Calculating “the value of a negro at the age of twenty-one,” he explained that “[f]rom birth to fifteen years of age, including food,

⁶¹⁶ Cooper, *Introductory Lecture to A Course of Law* (Columbia: The Telescope Office, 1831), 3.

⁶¹⁷ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 94. On pages 160-161 of *Slavery in White and Black*, Fox-Genovese and Genovese support this reading of Cooper’s comments on the expense of slavery as paternalistic. “Replying to the claim that free labor was more costly than slave, George Fitzhugh concluded – as did Karl Marx – that, therefore, free workers suffered greater exploitation than slave.” Briefly invoking Cooper himself, they remark, “Dew, Thomas Cooper, George Tucker, and others who taught leaders of the southern bench and bar pointed toward the separation of the master-slave relation from the business aspects of slavery.” In general during the antebellum era, “slaves received greater protection than free workers did.”

cloathing [sic], life insurance, and medicine,” a slave would cost rather than earn money.” From fifteen to twenty-one, his labour may be made to pay the cost of his insurance, attendance, maintenance and cloathing.” He counseled the future planters to exercise patience: “The work he can do from birth to fifteen years of age, will scarcely compensate the insurance of his life, and the medicine and attendance he may need.” Cooper continued, “I think all hazards included and all earnings deducted, the lowest cost of a negro of twenty-one, to the person who raises him, will, on an average, be five hundred dollars.” The professor did not sugar-coat the cost of a slave society. “The usual work of a field hand, is barely two thirds what a white day labourer at usual wages would perform.” Despite this fact, Cooper declared that slaves must be supported in all cases: “He may become sick; or lame; he may die or run away; he must be maintained in old age.” Despite this, Cooper represented the importance of outlaying the necessary money in order to support the enslaved workers and the system as a whole. Despite high prices, a superior society resulted, and profit would come to the patient owner’s pocket.⁶¹⁸

Cooper embraced the climate-based argument for slavery in his classroom. “Nothing will justify slave labour in point of economy,” he admitted, “but the nature of the soil and climate which incapacitates a white man from labouring in the summer time; as on the rich lands in Carolina and Georgia.” Cooper defended the slave system of the Deep South, both socially and economically: “I doubt if the rich lands could [be] cultivated without slave labour.” Instructing the future masters in the proper amounts of sustenance, Cooper calculated, “The food of such a negro is nine quarts of corn, and four pounds of salt pork per week. His food, cloathing, medicine, and attendance, will amount to about forty dollars a year, on the average, where they [slaves] are well taken care of.”

⁶¹⁸ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 94-95.

Cooper advocated caring for slaves and practiced this philosophy personally (see chapter two.). He pointedly observed that free workers were not without their own price. “I think every white labourer of twenty-one years of age, has cost, in this country, one thousand dollars.”⁶¹⁹

In his address to the SCC graduating class of 1821, Cooper declared, “[I]t is probable, that you will all become voluntarily, politicians of various grades.” The SCC president advised the new group of Southern leaders to increase independence from the North through home manufacturing. He remarked that some of the graduates might go into this area of business. He said, “[N]o tariff in favor of that system will be necessary. We need not urge Congress to tax the great mass of our citizens, in support of a few monopolizing speculators, or pick the pocket of the farmer to swell the purse of the manufacturer.” The professor remarked that a few privately owned spinning jennies “for domestic use, and a power loom for coarse weaving, such as could be managed by our black population,” would be appropriate in a small private manufacturing system. Slaves would not, then, be excluded from Cooper’s home manufacturing scheme.⁶²⁰

Cooper warned his students of the federal government’s power to destroy Southern social stability. For the sake of argument, he imagined that “twenty years hence” Congress might decide, due to the enormous value of cotton, to levy “a duty of six and a half cents...on all raw cotton exported from the United States to foreign parts.” At the same time, he posited, “a similar petition is presented from the woolen manufacturers praying, that, after the example of Great Britain” they would forbid “the export of wool and of sheep from the United States” and insist that corpses be shrouded in wool for

⁶¹⁹ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 95-96.

⁶²⁰ Cooper, *Address to the Graduates of the South Carolina College, December 1821* (Columbia: D. Faust, 1821), 6-7.

burial, “as in Great Britain.” In the midst of this hypothetical economic chaos, “The southern planters and northern farmers in vain remonstrate against this flagrant act of injustice, by which their industry is to be paralysed [sic], and the manufacturers to be pampered.” The northern-led government, however, refused to recall this deadly measure: “The manufacturers in Congress, argue triumphantly, this is nothing more than a salutary extention [sic] of the tariff principle of the year 1824-1825.” This example alerted the new graduates to fight tariff aggression and avoid Britain’s socioeconomic troubles.⁶²¹

Connecting the tariff with antislavery measures, Cooper continued: “Suppose half a dozen years hence, the generous clamours of the philanthropist who exercise their strong feelings of pure benevolence at the expence of their neighbors, should prevail on Congress to pass a law for the emancipation of all slaves in southern states: the southern states remonstrate; and urge, this is contrary to the known principle of compromise on which our federal union was founded.” However, the loose constitutional interpretation style of the Federalists, along with specific examples, would be cited to defend the decision: “[T]he general welfare is the polar star of our national government.” At this point, “the southern states” would inquire, “[H]ow have we given up our local sovereignty and independence?” It would, at that point, be too late to regain it.⁶²²

In the classroom, Cooper revealed his belief that the republic would be destroyed by the federal government if led by the Northern contingent in the tariff situation. After presenting arguments to prove the decision foolish and unfair, he said, “I REST ON REPUBLICAN PRINCIPLES. No legislature of a republic can possess the power of

⁶²¹ Cooper, *Lectures on Political Economy*, 207.

⁶²² Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 207-208.

granting exclusive privileges of any kind to one class of citizens over the rest, unless, in foreseen and distinctly specified cases. If they do, they act fraudulently, and usurp a power never conferred on them.” This was, indeed, a “power in hostility with the principles of republican government.” He encouraged his students to take action against such steps when they became politicians.⁶²³

As historian Elbert Vaughn Wells wrote of Cooper in 1917, “Perhaps the most important section of Dr. Cooper’s work for the student of the political history of the period, is that which deals with the problem of slave labor, revealing, as it does, the view of one in a position of the greatest importance in the shaping of intelligent opinion in the South.” He further remarked, “The effects of his published works dealing with economic questions, and his lectures delivered in connection with his professorship in South Carolina College, are difficult to over-estimate.” These lectures directly influenced “young men who were destined to assume positions of leadership” and largely dictated “their share in crystallizing opposition to the interference of the national government in State affairs [and] a protective tariff.” SCC students put Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s training into practice in their adult lives as Southern politicians, social leaders, slaveholders, and soldiers.⁶²⁴

II. Actions Speak Louder than Words: The Alumni

After an individual (name unknown) objected to SCC’s Southern Rights Association in the *Columbia Telegraph*, an anonymous student calling himself the “junior of 1851” submitted a rebuttal in its defense. “The students of the South Carolina College repudiate old [Henry] Clay and all his [pro-tariff] principles. Freesoilism and

⁶²³ Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 211.

⁶²⁴ Wells, “Dr. Thomas Cooper, Economist,” 17, 23.

Abolitionism cannot flourish on the soil irradiated by the genius of Calhoun.” This statement closely resembled Lieber’s opinions, and he had aided students in writing the Southern Rights Association creed. In religious terms, the “junior of 1851” continued, “We all bow with reverence and offer up our humble devotion at the foot of the ‘great Southern cross.’ The operation of the spirit there inculcates the independence of the Southern States and fosters allegiance to South Carolina; and should she secede, her College claims a ‘place in the picture near the flashing of the guns.’” Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber all instructed this “junior of 1851” during his time at the College. This student, whose name remains unknown, “volunteered at the first call to arms,” alumnus Yates Snowden recounted many years later in 1905. “He indignantly refused excellent pay in a blockading company, with an easy berth at Nassau.” Instead, he fought in Virginia, “where, as captain of the Sumter Guards...in the bloody trenches around Petersburg, he took his last ‘place in the picture near the flashing of the guns.’” The “junior of 1851” had indeed taken his religion of devotion to South Carolina and offered himself up as a sacrifice to the idol he had learned to worship at his professors’ feet.⁶²⁵

The students of the four professors provide the most profound testimony to their remarkable influence. Since space does not permit a complete discussion of the numerous influential SCC graduates and attendees whose worldviews developed in Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s lecture rooms, a spreadsheet is included in appendix one that lists the names and contributions of these individuals, noting which professors instructed them. Over two hundred politicians, educators, and social leaders’ names appear. For example, George S. James, a student of Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, fired

⁶²⁵ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 255; Yates Snowden, “In the Days before the War,” *The Centennial Celebration of South Carolina College*, 46.

the first shot of the Civil War at Fort Sumter. The number of lawyers and ministers, however, proved too numerous to include, though their stamp upon South Carolina's citizens was also significant. Certain notable examples will be discussed in more detail.

A. General Statistics

To the senior class of 1830, Cooper stated, "Many of you, I hope and believe, are destined to serve your country as legislators." His hopes were more than realized. The number of politicians who studied with him included several governors, senators, representatives, and judges. Cooper trained many antebellum governors, such as James Henry Hammond and William Aiken. His student John B. Floyd served as Governor of Virginia and United States Secretary of War. Cooper's students William Henry Gist, Francis W. Pickens, Milledge Luke Bonham, and Andrew G. Magrath led South Carolina through secession and the Civil War, holding the office of governor consecutively from 1858 to 1865.⁶²⁶

"The influence of the 'schoolmaster of States' Rights' on his youthful auditors cannot be overestimated," Daniel Hollis' 1951 college history attests. "[S]ome twenty-four of his former students appeared as delegates at the secession convention in 1860" in addition to "many others who helped guide South Carolina on its course" from 1850-1860. Hollis believes that Cooper would have especially applauded the "combination" that labored "to take South Carolina out of the federal union," including David F. Jamison, who presided over the secession convention. Many other SCC grads, "while not on the immediate scene at the convention...did their share in making secession possible. The old warrior would have been pleased, for his boys had calculated the value of the

⁶²⁶ Cooper, *Address to the Graduates of the South Carolina College at the Public Commencement* (Columbia: S.J. M'Morris, 1831), 8. See appendix for more details on the individuals listed.

union and found it wanting.” Some SCC alumni influenced the people of their own locality, while others traveled to influence other Southern states to join the secession movement.⁶²⁷

SCC graduate Leroy Youmans (1852) directly connected slavery and states’ rights beliefs to the atmosphere of SCC. In his view, “the college...made South Carolina the prompt and determined champion of Southern rights and interests, especially of State sovereignty, free trade, and the institution of domestic African slavery.” In addition, the alumni “deeply impressed the doctrines entertained by South Carolina on these subjects, on the heart and intellect of the entire South and Southwest.” Youmans called “this influence” one of truly “historical significance, and among those prime factors responsible for this influence, the name of Thomas Cooper...must never be obscured.” He avowed Cooper to be the “stronge[st] supporter...of the famous Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, of the sovereignty of the States, of the right of a State to secede from the Federal Union, and of freedom of trade.” Youmans affirmed Cooper’s supremacy in the state even above and beyond Calhoun: “He was in advance of the great South Carolina statesmen in his pronounced advocacy of State sovereignty and free trade, and had impressed his views with intensity and vigor.”⁶²⁸

In addition to Cooper’s protégés, students from Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s tenures also led the South, both before the war and during the Redeemer period. Youmans demonstrated that SCC graduates greatly influenced not only South Carolina, but also the region; “The ideas instilled, the doctrines inculcated, the influence exerted by the College, were disseminated throughout the whole southern and southwestern country,

⁶²⁷ Hollis, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 95-96.

⁶²⁸ Youmans, “The Historical Signification of the South Carolina College,” 162.

not only by the students from these other States, but by the great number of native South Carolina students who, after graduation here, emigrated there.” Youmans revealed that, between 1820 and 1860, South Carolinians frequently relocated to other southern states, according to the 1880 census. “The whole population in 1860 was 470,527, at which time 193,389 white persons born in South Carolina were living in other states.” Youmans calculated that “[t]wo-fifths of the whole native born population” resided “in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas.” Many of these graduates held influential roles: “The high positions in the vocations and professions, and in State and Federal affairs and councils, taken by the graduates of the College in those States, whether citizens there by birth or migration” demonstrated “the influence exerted in these States by the training, culture, and education of the South Carolina College.”⁶²⁹

Historian Michael Sugrue also remarks on SCC graduates’ profound influence on the state and the region, specifically in proslavery doctrine. “Throughout the lower South, South Carolina College alumni defended slavery from the pulpit, from the press, and from the classroom. Almost all were involved, directly or indirectly, in the antebellum defence [sic] of the South and its peculiar institution whether they held political office or not.” They also heavily impacted the move to secession. For instance, a surprising number of graduates “were members of the Secession conventions of Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, North Carolina, and Virginia.”⁶³⁰

Although Hollis mistakenly views Lieber as an abolitionist who instructed the students in unionism and never supported slavery, he mentions that many of Lieber’s students stood prominent within the Confederacy. “Many of Lieber’s students... became

⁶²⁹ Youmans, “The Historical Signification of the South Carolina College,” 161.

⁶³⁰ Sugrue, “South Carolina College,” 47. His essay on alumni careers proved useful in discovering the roles of SCC graduates in other states.

prominent Southern leaders and Confederate generals.” Preston Brooks, who left SCC in his senior year in 1839, personally hastened the Civil War in 1856 by caning Charles Sumner on the floor of the United States Senate. Laurence M. Keitt, a South Carolina state representative, died leading Kershaw’s Brigade in 1864. Texas senator Louis T. Wigfall largely influenced the Lone Star State to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy. William H. Wallace and States Rights Gist served the Confederacy as brigadier generals. Matthew C. Butler was a Confederate general and later held an eighteen-year senatorship in the Redeemer era. In addition to roles in the Civil War, Wade Hampton was largely responsible for establishing the racially discriminating Redeemer regime in South Carolina. While he could not reinstate the antebellum status quo, he strove to place the white male elite in charge and to steal blacks’ civil rights. Practically all of Lieber and Preston’s students also studied under Thornwell.⁶³¹

Although Hollis does not credit Preston's influence on them, he notes that “[m]any of Preston’s students...were destined to become shining lights on the battlefields of 1861-1865.” Confederate major generals included John H. Wharton of Texas as well as Martin Witherspoon Gary, “a future storm center of South Carolina politics” in the Reconstruction and Redeemer years, in addition to several brigadier generals and colonels “too numerous to mention.” Governors Thomas B. Jeter and John Peter Richardson led the state through the Reconstruction period, in addition to “a veritable array of future judges and state senators.” These alumni were heavily involved in the attempt to set the clock back within South Carolina so that the white male elite would

⁶³¹ Hollis, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 182-184.

once again rule those “others” which they considered beneath them in terms of class, race, or gender.⁶³²

B. Outstanding Examples

In addition to general statistics, numerous testimonies exist concerning influential Southern leaders that Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber personally indoctrinated. James Henry Hammond was, in historian William Freehling’s words, “Thomas Cooper’s prize pupil.” A poor boy of Northern descent attending SCC in the 1820s, Hammond developed a desire to “be as wealthy, as famous, as much a mover of events as were his rich classmates – and right now.” Hammond greatly revered Cooper and learned South Carolina doctrines in his lecture room. Noting the young man’s abilities, the professor “praised [Hammond] as a coming disciple.” Cooper’s mentoring of his pupil did not stop after graduation; in the 1830s Hammond “became editor of Thomas Cooper’s faction’s politically fiery newspaper.” He then moved to the position of a United States representative for South Carolina; when he resigned in 1836, “Cooper’s closest thing to a point man in Washington” had departed.⁶³³

Later, Hammond wielded even greater influence as the governor of South Carolina in the 1840s. The politician’s writings and speeches propagated Cooper’s thought: Hammond’s 1845 *Letters on Slavery* proved quite influential, as did his 1858 “mudsill thesis,” which posited that all great societies required a servant class. Cooper’s “disciple” internalized and passed on to others the proslavery paternalist rationale learned at SCC. “There is not a happier, more contented race upon the earth [than slaves]... Their lives and persons [are]... protected by the law, all their sufferings alleviated by the kindest

⁶³² Hollis, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 156-157.

⁶³³ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, 314-315, 320, 331.

and most interested care, and their domestic affections cherished and maintained,” describing a type of slave utopia. Hammond demonstrated considerable zeal to maintain the institution. The governor’s “Cotton is king” speech, which asserted the South’s strength over the North and England, further encouraged South Carolina toward secession. It is well known that Hammond frequently disregarded the vaunted paternalist system in his private abuse of slaves, but he nonetheless propagated the concept in the public sphere.⁶³⁴

Green’s 1916 college history notes SCC alumni significance in the field of proslavery authorship. “In...the discussion of the subject of domestic African slavery in the South, very high place must always be given to the spoken and written utterance of the men who had been educated at the South Carolina College,” Green wrote. He named Thornwell and Hammond, students who sat under Cooper’s lectures, as “noted” examples. In Green’s opinion, the two open letters Hammond wrote to the English abolitionist Thomas Clarkson were of a particularly high quality.⁶³⁵

Josiah Nott was one of Cooper’s protégés, as well. “Josiah grew up in Columbia, in the days of Thomas Cooper, in a family of lawyers and physicians,” O’Brien recounted in *Conjectures of Order*. The young Nott took Cooper’s teachings on the biological inferiority of blacks quite seriously. In later years as a well-known antebellum scientist, Nott’s articles, “Caucasian and Negro Races” (1844) and “Unity of the Human Race” (1844), proved quite influential to antebellum racial thought. His philosophies were, by his own testimony, “partly his own recollections of...Dr. Cooper’s teachings.” Nott’s biographer Reginald Horsman states that Cooper “became one of the first intellectuals in

⁶³⁴ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, 314-315, 320, 331; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 179.

⁶³⁵ Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 313-314.

the South to maintain that the Negro race was inherently inferior to the white... In later years his pupil Josiah Nott was to take this argument further and argue that an inferior Negro race constituted a separate species with a separate origin [polygenesis].” This was a result of his years in training at SCC, where Cooper’s ideas “fascinated the young Josiah Nott,” and he adopted his instructor’s ideals: a “passionate defense of slavery, the emphasis on states’ rights, and the disbelief in the authority of the Bible.” These tenets of Cooper’s prompted Nott to embrace polygenesis to explain racial difference.⁶³⁶

Proslavery theorist Edwin DeLeon also received his training at SCC. DeLeon attended the college at the time of Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, and, in addition, had known Cooper personally. His brother, Thomas Cooper DeLeon, was named in the professor’s honor. The DeLeon “family’s friends included Francis Lieber and Thomas Cooper,” and they also “knew the Prestons.” This composite effort of all four professors was not in vain; DeLeon demonstrated his acceptance of their worldview. For example, in 1845, DeLeon addressed the SCC student body. The young graduate “urge[d] the importance of liberal education” and “linked the exploitation of uneducated poor workers to the commission of the crimes and outrages that disgraced the cities of Europe and the North.” Having been thoroughly indoctrinated in the dangers of the European labor

⁶³⁶ O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 240-241, n. 245, 247. In addition to his students, Cooper influenced other Carolinians with whom he associated at the College and in Columbia. Dumas Malone, Cooper’s biographer, states that Cooper also influenced well-known proslavery authors Thomas Dew and William Harper. Cooper’s concepts as stated in *On the Constitution* “doubtless exerted direct influence” on them. Harper and Cooper shared undeniable connections: “Harper, whose *Memoir on Slavery*, published in 1838, carried the doctrine of inequality a step further, was a member of the board of trustees of South Carolina College, and presented the resolution in vindication of Cooper which was adopted by that body in 1832.” Malone further states that “Cooper’s right to be regarded as a pioneer in the philosophical defense of slavery seems indubitable.” Platte furthers Malone’s argument, stating that “Cooper’s influence was especially great upon Robert Barnwell Rhett... He became intrigued with the study of political economy after the publication of Cooper’s lectures in 1826. Rhett joined the crusade against the tariff led by Cooper... but turned to Calhoun in 1833.” Even after this, “he continued to use Cooper’s arguments against the tariff.” Malone, *Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 288-289; Reginald Horsman, *Josiah Nott of Mobile: Southerner, Physician, and Racial Theorist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 14-15, 18.

system in the lecture-room, DeLeon reinforced this lesson to his soon-to-be alumni brothers. In a speech to the debating societies, he “launched a barrage against Europe’s free-labor system in which ‘the masses are regarded merely as beasts of burden created for the benefit of the privileged orders.’” The 1845 alumnus further “added a caveat against the destructive seductions of socialism and other isms that threatened private property.”⁶³⁷

DeLeon’s life choices further testified to the four professors’ influence. Lieber wrote a glowing letter of recommendation for his former student when DeLeon applied for the *belles lettres* professorship at the University of Alabama, praising his personal character and his academic knowledge. Don Doyle states that DeLeon, who emitted “bellicose nationalism,” “moved to Washington and became the editor of a secessionist newspaper” in the 1850s. As Confederate public relations emissary to Europe in the 1860s, he “saw his task as instructing foreigners on the benevolence of Southern slavery.” Although not overly successful at European diplomacy, DeLeon was nonetheless committed to his beliefs.⁶³⁸

Laurence M. Keitt, a protégé of Thornwell, demonstrated his acceptance of his professor’s proslavery thought, not only in content, but also in wording. After graduation, Keitt served South Carolina in the United States House of Representatives. In January 1857, Keitt declared: “Capital and muscle are facing each other, and the antagonism between them in free society seems to be beyond the reach of legislative lead line. There is a gathering conflict between socialism and slavery.” The representative had caught

⁶³⁷ Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black*, 92; O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, vol. 1, 166.

⁶³⁸ Lieber to the University of Alabama Trustees, June 20, 1846, Lieber Papers, SCL; Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 193-197.

Thornwell's concern for the abuse of free labor and espoused the belief that, sooner or later, workers would revolt.⁶³⁹

Lewis M. Ayer, an 1843 graduate who had studied with Thornwell and Lieber, would later become a Confederate representative of South Carolina. Before the war, in 1858, he returned to his alma mater to stir up the college boys, delivering a speech entitled "Patriotism and State Sovereignty." Preaching South Carolina patriotism in religious terms, he stated, "If the thing known as a State be of divine origin, the love of it must be a religious sentiment, and its service a sacred duty." He quoted Calhoun, who stated that society was greater than government; in the same paragraph, he also mentioned "the learned Dr. Lieber, [who] in his great work, the *Political Ethics*, has fully and ably maintained the divinity of States." Citing the failure of the French Revolution, Ayer explained that "Patriotism must, then, prove traitor to society, when it yields an idolatrous devotion to mere forms of government." In contrast, "allegiance and worship are due only to the divine sovereignty of the State; and when any human contrivance puts itself in conflict with that supreme power, patriotism must oppose it." Denying the theory that South Carolina had pledged itself to the Union, Ayer told his eager listeners, "The constitution and laws do not constitute the country. They are framed by the State for its use and benefit, and the State may make and re-make them according to the high behest of its sovereign will."⁶⁴⁰

"Such is the history of our original American Colonies," Ayer affirmed. "In every localized political community... we find... the natural elements and divine seal of

⁶³⁹ Laurence M. Keitt, Speech of Jan. 15, 1857 in *Daily South Carolinian*, Jan. 30, 1857, in Sugrue, "South Carolina College," footnote on page 200.

⁶⁴⁰ Lewis M. Ayer, *Patriotism and State Sovereignty: An Oration Delivered between the Two Societies of the South Carolina College on the Fourth of December 1858* (Charleston: Printed by A.J. Burke, 1859), 3, 6-8.

sovereignty.” Continuing the states’ rights ideals of his professors, he said: “We hold that the thirteen original American Colonies were sovereign States before they declared the fact to the world on the 4th of July, 1776;” in fact, he stated that they never really belonged to Great Britain. Espousing opinions learned in the lecture room, Ayer used the example that Ireland had been “wrongfully bereft of her rights by [Britain’s] force and fraud.” Just as Britain and other powers held onto territories that by right ought to be independent, Ayer argued, the Northern-led federal government was close to committing the same crime with the South. “Let the Southern States of this Confederacy note the fact, and take warning!” Ayer declaimed in the society hall. “The tenure of our most vital political rights, by a mere negative title, a sort of balance of power system, even could such an anomalous state of things long exist, will never satisfy a people who are in possession of all the grand elements of freedom and independence.” Calling the young men to arms, Ayer explained, “They must speedily exercise [their freedom and independence], or finally abandon them.” The young graduate avowed that state allegiance more clearly reflected a true republic than did federal allegiance.⁶⁴¹

Ayer further utilized his professors’ negative example of Britain in speaking to the embryonic Southern leaders. “Human ambition and lust of dominion has united, under one government, the naturally different and distinct nations, Scotland, Ireland, and England; and...the two former languish in despicable insignificance.” As had the American colonies’ break with Britain, “The dissolution of all such unnatural unions would ever result...in enhanced prosperity and power to each.” Bringing the lesson home, he stated, “It would have been far better for our own beloved South, if she had earlier and better learned that nations...can[not] shift with impunity, their natural

⁶⁴¹ Ayer, *Patriotism and State Sovereignty*, 9-10, 13-14.

responsibilities, by mingling up and mixing together what God has made essentially different and distinct.” He exhorted the soon-to-be soldiers, “The good and true patriot must live, daily, hourly live for his State, as well as be ready and willing...to die for her.” Comparing the North to a predatory outside power, Ayer declaimed, “It should be the chief care of virtuous and enlightened patriotism...to guard [one’s state] from the fraud and folly of Federal consolidation, as from...foreign aggression.”⁶⁴²

Not only did Ayer imitate his professors; he also continued their mission. As an SCC graduate, he spoke to “the young gentlemen of the...societies” as “an elder brother...Situated as our State is, she can never hope to become physically great and powerful; but she may remain...honored, respected, and of influence – through the eminent patriotism, virtue, and intelligence of her sons.” Reminding them of the literal debt they owed the State, Ayer mentioned that a third of South Carolina’s annual budget, \$25,000, was allocated to SCC. He then exhorted, “The character of this College, young gentlemen, is chiefly in your keeping; transmit it, untarnished, to those who shall succeed you. The State has hoped and labored to secure it such a reputation as would attract to it, in large numbers, the youth of other States.” Ayer placed the Southern ambassadorship upon their shoulders: “We would have them come here, that they may go away, bearing...a love for our people, and an enlightened respect for the peculiarities of our most admirable government – a government often maligned and widely disliked, because it is little understood.” This goal was certainly reached; many graduates brought ideas to their own Southern states as a result of their time at SCC.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴² Ayer, *Patriotism and State Sovereignty*, 16-17, 19, 21.

⁶⁴³ Ayer, *Patriotism and State Sovereignty*, 24.

Ayer explained, “In your just and laudable aspirations for fame and fortune, you must not forget what South-Carolina now expects of you. Let your claims to popular esteem and public honors, hereafter” center around “the pure, patriotic fidelity, displayed in your College career. Let your utmost endeavors be directed to the exaltation of this cherished institution of the State.” As a last charge, Ayer concluded, “From her proud halls and her peaceful bowers, let high-souled patriotism and rich learning pour forth in ceaseless streams of living light, to flood the land all over with her glories.” Considering that almost all of the students present in December 1858 offered their lives on the battlefield for their state, Ayer’s argument was taken with deadly seriousness.⁶⁴⁴

Future South Carolina governor Francis W. Pickens, while at SCC, internalized Cooper’s concepts. According to Pickens’ biographer, Youmans, Cooper “enunciated, with consummate ability and singular force, doctrines of political economy and the philosophy of government which took deep root in South Carolina.” Pickens was fascinated by Cooper’s lectures “on the fundamental principles involving...*the sovereignty of the States.*” Youmans contended in his sketch: “Mr. Pickens’ position on these great questions, and in the great struggle, first of opinions and then of arms to which they led, was taken then, early in life, while a college boy; and thenceforward, to the day of his death, he never swerved or wavered from that position,” despite the fact that “its armed adherents went to the wall, and its flag went down on the red field of battle.” In Pickens’ opinion, “the sovereignty of the States was not an abstraction or a theory – it was a creed, a religion. So early and so deeply was he imbued with the principles of the States Rights party” that Pickens wrote seven pieces, subsequently published in the Charleston *Mercury*, David McCord’s states’ rights paper. In these

⁶⁴⁴ Ayer, *Patriotism and State Sovereignty*, 24.

essays, the SCC college graduate “asserted the separate sovereignty of the States, their right in their sovereign capacity to nullify an unconstitutional act of Congress, to relieve their citizens from its operation, and to open their ports in defiance of the restrictions of an unconstitutional and oppressive tariff.” Since Pickens published the articles under a pen name, some speculated that the authors were “Hayne, McDuffie, and Hamilton,” three prominent Carolinians.⁶⁴⁵

Although Cooper was his major influence, Preston also guided Pickens. On his 1832 election to the South Carolina Legislature, Pickens made “his first speech...at the request of Wm. C. Preston, on the latter’s resolutions responsive to Jackson’s famous proclamation on the Nullification imbroglio.” After two influential years in the State House, Pickens obtained a seat in the United States “Congress...without opposition.” Along with James Henry Hammond, another United States Representative from South Carolina, Pickens “objected to the reception of abolition petitions;” in the Senate at that time, Preston also protested the petitions (see chapter four.) In 1836, Pickens presented “one of the first arguments ever made in Congress against the constitutional power of the government to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.” Moreover, the representative “forcibly portrayed the power of the abolitionists amid conflicting political parties.” He warned the House “that from holding the balance of power the [abolitionists] would finally control the destinies of the government.” He declared, “It is of no avail to close our eyes to passing events around us in this country and in Europe.” If Southerners did not fight the abolitionists, he warned with racist horror, they would soon be forced to “abandon our country to become a black colony...It is in vain to avoid the contest.” This

⁶⁴⁵ Youmans, *A Sketch of the Life and Services of Francis W. Pickens* (Charleston, SC: The News Job Presses, 187-) [exact date within the 1870s unknown], 5-8.

speech, compounded with the fact that Pickens was one of the first politicians to argue for Texas annexation, indicates that he closely imitated Preston, his political mentor in Columbia.⁶⁴⁶

In later years, Pickens authored the secession ordinance at the 1852 South Carolina State Convention. He turned down opportunities to serve as the American Minister to France and England, probably having acquired Cooper's distaste for those nations, but became minister to St. Petersburg in 1856. Deeply moved by the North-South conflict of the late 1850s, he resigned and returned to South Carolina in November, 1860. In December its people elected him governor; Youmans declared that Pickens "will be forever...entwined with the decisive initiatory steps which she took in armed defense of those principles of free government and theories of States rights...to illustrate in action her opinions and creed." Opposing the South's potential connection with nations like Britain, he advocated that the region connect with countries of like interests such as Spain, but this did not come to fruition. Finishing his term in 1862, he briefly reappeared "as a member of the Convention of 1865" as a part of the "reconstruction programme." Even then, Pickens proved "consistent and logical in his States Rights theories and principles" when he "moved and carried an ordinance for the repeal of the Secession ordinance of 1860 – the repeal affirming the past validity of that which is repealed." Pickens patterned his life choices after his instruction in the SCC lecture halls.⁶⁴⁷

Andrew Gordon Magrath, another Civil War governor of South Carolina, also sat under Cooper's tutelage and reflected his influence throughout his varied career. In his biographical sketch, Youmans, who roundly approved of Southern antebellum culture

⁶⁴⁶ Youmans, *A Sketch of the Life and Services of Francis W. Pickens*, 8-10.

⁶⁴⁷ Youmans, *A Sketch of the Life and Services of Francis W. Pickens*, 10-18.

himself, stated that Magrath studied “with the greatest zeal, zest, and success at the South Carolina College...the Alma Mater of so many Southern statesmen, jurists, and orators.” From 1827 to 1831, Magrath studied with other “youths of high promise” such as Thornwell, “who sat at the feet of the great teacher, Thomas Cooper...whose political life was one continued struggle against all forms of political tyranny and centralization.” Although he studied law with unionist James Petigru and at Harvard with Joseph Story, the “two great law masters” did not influence him “in matters of the Federal Constitution or of politics.” Instead, “as in the case of so many of his Southern contemporaries, the influence of Thomas Cooper and John C. Calhoun was ever pronounced and dominant.”⁶⁴⁸

Magrath served his district from 1840-1844 as a representative in the State House. In 1848 he supported Zachary Taylor, “a Whig, but a Southerner, against Cass, Democrat,” because of “the slavery question.” In the 1852 state convention, Magrath voted with the “large majority” who passed a statement which said that South Carolina voluntarily joined the Union and that “in the exercise of the same sovereign will, it is her right...to secede from the same Federal Government.” An accompanying resolution declared that the state had just cause to break from the Union which had threatened its peculiar rights, “especially in relation to slavery,” and was only remaining with the Union “from considerations of expediency.” As United States Judge for South Carolina from 1856-1860, the SCC graduate became a respected political leader.⁶⁴⁹

After Lincoln’s election in 1860, Magrath, in “burning speech,” urged South Carolina citizens to, “in convention assembled...exercise the sovereign right of secession

⁶⁴⁸ Youmans, *A Sketch of the Life of Governor Andrew Gordon Magrath* (Charleston, SC: Walker, Evans, and Cogswell, 1896), 1-4.

⁶⁴⁹ Youmans, *Sketch of the Life of Governor Magrath*, 1-4.

from the Federal Union, and maintain that right, at all hazards, peaceably if they could, forcibly if they must.” After this speech, he and two other SCC graduates, James Conner, United States Attorney for South Carolina, and William F. Colcock, Collector of the Port of Charleston, resigned their offices together. They then gave “impassioned utterances...to masses of people in Charleston, and also in Columbia during the “extra session [convened] by Governor [William Henry] Gist,” another SCC alumnus. Magrath’s district elected him as their chief delegate to the Secession Convention of December 1860, in which he figured prominently. In 1861, Jefferson Davis appointed Magrath Confederate States Judge for South Carolina. A few years later, in 1864, he became Governor of South Carolina. In Youmans’ opinion, “if any of her sons could rescue South Carolina in the gloomy and perilous condition,” it would have been Magrath. His governorship terminated in early 1865 after Sherman’s march through Columbia, when the United States Government imprisoned him. Cooper’s protégé ended his long political career on his release from prison in December 1865.⁶⁵⁰

C. The Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies

A good indication of the influence the four professors evinced upon their students during the four decades preceding the Civil War is plainly visible in the two SCC debating societies’ minutes. The young men, in turn, influenced the community through their debates and speeches. In 1931, society historian John Marion wrote of the antebellum period, “It is difficult to appreciate...how completely the history of the societies [was] entwined with the life of the time, or to understand the interest of the people of the entire state in their proceedings – an interest so strong that the public often

⁶⁵⁰ Youmans, *A Sketch of the Life of Governor Magrath*, 4-9.

was notified of society celebrations, anniversaries, and other exercises a year in advance, through the Charleston and Columbia papers.”⁶⁵¹

Debate topics and conclusions demonstrate that the students frequently adopted their professors’ beliefs. For instance, the young men reiterated their professors’ opinions concerning British rule over the impoverished Irish peasants. In 1832, the Euphradians brought forward the topic of the Irish rebellion of 1796-1798, when a group unsuccessfully fought for independence from Great Britain. They queried, “Was the English government justifiable in punishing capitally the rebellious Irish of [17]97 or does its conduct fix a blot on its character”? In the spirit of their Professor Cooper, to them “Old Coot,” his students judged Britain’s actions culpable. In addition, the Euphradians believed that Britain’s ill treatment of Ireland had even been to the island kingdom’s own detriment: “Has the Tythe System which has [been implemented] in Ireland been beneficial or injurious to Great Britain?” This debate again ruled Britain at fault. After Cooper died, students still read his *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826) and *Manual on Political Economy* (1833), both of which denounced England’s Corn Laws that significantly decreased the working class’ food supply. Cooper would have been proud when the Clariosophics decided the question “Ought the corn laws of England to be repealed” affirmatively in 1842.⁶⁵²

In the 1840s, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s students also judged that Britain had abused Ireland. The Clariosophics decided in 1843 that “the Legislative union of England and Ireland” had not, “on the whole,” proved “beneficial to the latter.” The next month, the young debaters even ventured so far as to argue that “societies [should] be

⁶⁵¹ Marion, *History of the Clariosophic and Euphradian Societies*, 35.

⁶⁵² Euphradian Society Minutes, Feb. 20, 1830, Feb. 6, 1832, SCL; Clariosophic Society Minutes, Jan 1, 1842, SCL.

formed in the United States for the purpose of assisting Ireland in her endeavor to rid herself of the British yoke.” In the debating hall in 1844, the students again affirmed that “Ireland [would] enjoy more happiness under an independent Government.” In 1848, the Clariosophic Society debated the question, “Has the union of Ireland with England been injurious to the former?” Ruling affirmatively, they demonstrated concurrence with their professors’ opinions about Britain’s treatment of the Irish.⁶⁵³

In 1835, the major premise of Cooper’s proslavery defense came to the discussion table. The Clariosophics discussed “[w]hether...the condition of the Negro or that of the Labourer in manufactures [was] the most to be pitied.” Although on that occasion the slave was decided to be the more pitiable, the fact that the society debated the question at all has telling conclusions. The students evidently considered a factory operative to be not only an object of great pity, but also a type of slave, whose condition was in a category to be compared to slavery. Additionally, many of the Euphradian members decided the opposite – that the slave was better off than the factory operative. The fact that the question appeared pointed to Cooper’s influence, since he frequently discussed the plight of the factory worker and the better condition of the slave.⁶⁵⁴

Debaters demonstrated the same opinions on abolition as their four professors. In 1844, just three years after Thornwell’s travel in Europe, the Clariosophics questioned Britain’s motives. After the question “Do the attempts which Great Britain is now making to suppress slavery throughout the world proceed from honest motives” was presented and duly argued, the young men collectively confirmed their individual opinions by arguing that Britain was, indeed, insincere in attacking slavery abroad. During

⁶⁵³ Clariosophic Society Minutes, Jan. 15, 1843, Feb. 15, 1843, Dec. 4, 1844, June 3, 1848, SCL.

⁶⁵⁴ Clariosophic Society Minutes, May 25, 1835, SCL.

Thornwell's visit to Britain (see chapter three), he was convinced of the negative nature of English abolitionists while on shipboard. As a favorite teacher and author, his beliefs carried great weight with the students. The following debating point in 1845, although decided in the negative, gives indication of the frustration with abolition present in the Clariosophic Society: "Would it be impolitic in the South to recognize the summary execution of abolitionists?" Although Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber would surely have felt execution too extreme a measure, they had fostered strong disapproval and fear of abolitionists in their students, and a minority of the Clariosophics found execution reasonable.⁶⁵⁵

Proslavery arguments echoed in the society debate halls. The Clariosophics of Cooper's tenure, demonstrating their fear of slave revolt, argued in 1823 that "the southern States" should "keep a sufficient military force to suppress the insurrections of the slaves." In 1830, the society decided that "slavery as it now exists in the Southern States" was not "a political evil." The Euphradians arrived at a similar conclusion in 1828 when they debated the question "Are the slaves of any benefit to the U.S." and decided affirmatively. The following year, the society concluded that the institution "[s]hould...be permitted to exist." Coming to the same decision as their brother society had in 1830, the Euphradians also confirmed their belief that slavery was not "a political evil." Moreover, they deemed "slavery as it exist[s]...at present in the Southern States justifiable." In 1844, the Clariosophics demonstrated white supremacist views when they decided that "the killing of a slave" should "be accompanied with less punishment than

⁶⁵⁵ Clariosophic Society Minutes, June 1, 1844, April 12, 1845, SCL.

that of a white man.” Opting for the preservation of slavery, they decided that colonization societies should not “be encouraged.”⁶⁵⁶

The Euphradian Society also spoke decisively against emancipation. In 1824 and 1826, the young men who would later govern the state concurred with South Carolina’s state law forbidding individuals from freeing their slaves. The following year, they ruled that “the people of the United States” should not “emancipate their slaves.” In 1825 and 1830, the Euphradians argued that “Congress” had no right to “emancipate the slaves” or, in fact, to “intermeddle in any manner whatever concerning the emancipation of Slaves in the Southern States.” The young men took an especially strong view on the question “Could South Carolina provide for the emancipation of her Slaves in any manner beneficial to them so emancipated[?]” No one took the affirmative side, so the question received a unanimous negative. Two years later, they debated, “Would the emancipation of our slaves be judicious” and decided that it would not be.⁶⁵⁷

In Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s time, the Clariosophic Society felt that war was a reasonable response to outside forces that threatened slavery, particularly Europe and the North. Taking part and parcel in their professors’ views on British abolitionists, in 1844 the society affirmed that “the Law of nations” would, indeed, “justify the United States in declaring war against England for her declared purposes against our domestic institutions.” The following year, the young men affirmed secession, knowing it would likely be followed by war, in response to Congress’ curtailment of slavery. They decided that same year that “the abolition of Slavery in” Washington, D.C. would “be a sufficient

⁶⁵⁶ Clariosophic Society Minutes, May 24, 1823, Mar. 20, 1830, Jan. -, 1844, and Feb. 3, 1844, SCL; Euphradian Society Minutes, May 3, 1828, Jan. 26, 1829, Mar. 20, 1830, Dec. 7, 1832, SCL.

⁶⁵⁷ Euphradian Society Minutes, Jan. 31, 1824, April 16, 1825, Oct. 12, 1825, Feb. 20, 1830, [?] 28, 1826, Oct. 20, 1827, Feb. 20, 1830, Apr. 13, 1832, SCL.

cause for the withdrawal of the Southern States from the Union,” a decision which foreshadowed their future presence on secession conventions in various Southern states.⁶⁵⁸

The Clariosophics found Northern interference intolerable and wanted to expand the Southern domain through the annexation of Texas. Based on the evidence, it seems quite probable that the young men were following Preston’s career in the United States Senate and had read his 1838 speech, *On the Annexation of Texas* (see chapter four.) In 1842, they debated the question: “Ought Texas if she petitions again be admitted into the Union?” and agreed that she should be annexed. That same year, the young men decided that “Mexico” possessed no “just claim upon the territory and allegiance of Texas.” As much as they desired Texas’ admittance to the Union, however, the young elites wanted it for the benefit of the South alone. When asked if “the Southern States” should achieve the “annexation of Texas” at the price of its “division” into “slave-holding and non slave-holding States,” the response was a resounding no.⁶⁵⁹

The society declared their approval for the Gag Rule; their senator, Preston, had argued eloquently for Congress’ refusal of abolition petitions in his speech *On the Abolition Question* (1836). In 1844, the Clariosophics debated the current query “Ought Congress to consider all petitions presented to it?” and decided negatively. The following year, they agreed that “the 21st Rule of the House of Representatives of the U.S. excluding abolition petitions” should “be restored” forthwith. Declaring that the North had no right to interfere with Southern affairs, they approved the action of South Carolina congressman Robert Barnwell Rhett who had recently declined “to serve on the

⁶⁵⁸ Clariosophic Society Minutes, Nov. 23, 1844, Jan. 4, 1845, SCL.

⁶⁵⁹ Clariosophic Society Minutes, Apr. 2, 1842 and May 7, 1842, SCL.

committee” chosen to handle the Massachusetts petition “to abolish slave representation” in Washington.⁶⁶⁰

The Confederates-in-training enthusiastically supported Southern states’ rights doctrines. Even in the early 1820s, Cooper instructed them in the potential pitfalls of manufactures and taxation. The Euphradians approved of his concepts when they argued that “domestic manufactures” should not “be encouraged by taxing the importations from other countries.” In a direct endorsement of Cooper’s political stance, the Clariosophics “gave their endorsement to the language used by President Thomas Cooper in opposing the woolens bill in his famous controversial speech of July, 1827.” In 1828, the Euphradians likewise judged that it was not the purview of “the general Government to encourage Manufactures.” They further ruled that after South Carolinians “declared the Tariff unconstitutional,” they should, in turn, “nullify it within the state.” The members of both societies agreed in 1830, separately concluding that Carolinians possessed “as good reason to resist the Tariff of 1828 as our forefathers had to resist the tax rates” that had preceded the Revolutionary War. In 1831, the Euphradians determined that, if “South Carolina should nullify the present tariff laws...the general government” would, indeed, not “be justified in attempting to enforce the same.”⁶⁶¹

During Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s tenures, the Clariosophics espoused the same concepts, influenced by not only these three professors, but also by Cooper’s published writings. In 1842, they reasoned that “If the Tariff bill be not repealed or modified at our next session of Congress...the Southern States” should not hesitate to

⁶⁶⁰ Clariosophic Society Minutes, Jan. 20, 1844, Jan. 18, 1845, and Feb. 22, 1845, SCL.

⁶⁶¹ Euphradian Society Minutes, Nov. 22, 1828, May 1828, Oct 30, 1830, Oct. 29, 1831, SCL; Clariosophic Society Minutes, Mar. 27, 1823, Oct. 20, 1830, SCL; The Clariosophic Society’s affirmation of Cooper’s language concerning the tariff could not be located in the society minutes and was therefore taken from Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 238.

“nullify it.” Two years later, the debaters confirmed their belief that state power superseded that of the federal government, declaring that “a State” possessed “a constitutional right to nullify a law of the Government of the Union.” In 1847, the future politicians decided that “our Senators” should “vacate their seats in Congress” if that body approved “the Wilmot Proviso.”⁶⁶²

The Euphradians of Cooper’s time advocated Southern independence, even to the point of secession, in some of their debates. In 1828, they predicted the Confederacy’s formation when they decided that, if “disunion” occurred, the wisest course would be “for the Southern States to unite and form a federal government” rather than to remain separate entities. In 1830, the society determined that “[u]nder present circumstances...a Separation of the U.S.” would, in point of fact, “be beneficial.” The Clariosophics, during Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s professorships, also supported secession. “Would the passage of the Wilmot Proviso by Congress be sufficient cause for the dissolution of the Union?” they asked, and decided “in the affirmative.” The Euphradians thought that separation was just a matter of time: In 1836, the Euphradians decided that it was extremely unlikely that “our Union will last fifty years longer without war.” Five years later, they asserted that “the government of the United States” would not “exist a century,” confirming their earlier statement.⁶⁶³

The Euphradians espoused Cooper’s classical republican views of agricultural superiority. On debating the question “Is commerce or Agriculture more advantageous to a nation?” in 1823, they decided in favor of the latter. Two years later, they declared that the United States should foster agriculture over manufacturing. The Clariosophics also

⁶⁶² Clariosophic Society Minutes, Oct. 29, 1842, Apr. 13, 1844, and Nov. 1847, SCL.

⁶⁶³ Euphradian Society Minutes, Oct. 11, 1828, Oct. 9, 1830, Jan. 10, 1841, SCL; Clariosophic Society Minutes, Jan. 16, 1836, and Oct. 28, 1848, SCL.

supported the Southern agricultural economy in 1835 when they stated that domestic manufacturing would not “be promoting the general welfare.” In 1842, the students decided that in no case was a “protective tariff” a benefit to a people group. The next year, they continued in the same vein, stating that “an agricultural life” fostered greater “happiness” than “a professional...life.”⁶⁶⁴

The Clariosophics supported their belief in Southern cultural superiority, including its peculiar institution. In 1842, they decided that “the spirit of liberty” was indeed “higher in countries where there are slaves.” Thornwell, who had traveled abroad the year before, certainly affirmed this principle, lauding the Southern socioeconomic system and decrying the situation of struggling free workers in Britain and the North. In appreciation of their SCC education, the students avowed that it was “better to educate our children here, than at the north.” They further praised the South in 1844 when they determined that if the nation splintered apart, the “Southern republic” would have “the greater national advantage.” In 1848, the students deemed it highly unlikely “that slavery” would “be eventually abolished.” Later that year, they affirmed that the institution greatly benefitted the South.⁶⁶⁵

The societies decided that state support should be available for the poor; this is significant because all four professors demonstrated great concern for the welfare of the impoverished in other nations. The Euphradians affirmed in 1825 and 1827, during Cooper’s tenure, that providing for South Carolina’s poor was a matter sufficiently important as to be within the purview of the state rather than the districts. In 1848, during

⁶⁶⁴ Euphradian Society Minutes, Dec. 13, 1823, and Nov. 19, 1825, SCL; Clariosophic Society Minutes, May 9, 1835, Feb. 26, 1842, May 28, 1842, and Apr. 9, 1843, SCL.

⁶⁶⁵ Clariosophic Society Minutes, Nov. 12, 1842, Jan. 21, 1843, Mar. 9, 1844, Feb. 19, 1848, and Nov. 25, 1848, SCL.

Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's professorships in 1848, the Clariosophics even ventured so far as to state that South Carolina ought to "appropriate funds for the education of the poor." The four professors' sphere of influence remained strong in the society debate arena during the forty-year period.⁶⁶⁶

The literature the societies selected for their libraries demonstrates the power and popularity of the four professors as authors. 1850s library records from the Clariosophic Society show that three periodicals, the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, the *Southern Quarterly Review*, and the *Southern Review*, that often featured Thornwell's articles, were frequently borrowed. Cooper's *Lectures on Political Economy* (1826) remained a perennial favorite years after his death. He was so revered that the Clariosophics displayed his portrait in their debate hall. Society members often checked out the copy of Lieber's *Manual of Political Ethics* (1839.) A volume endorsed by Lieber and Thornwell, *Calhoun's Works*, also appear in the records.⁶⁶⁷

The Euphradian Society likewise valued the professors' literature, as their 1840s library records demonstrate. The *Southern Quarterly Review*, which Thornwell edited, proved popular. They read and digested *Calhoun's Speeches*, a volume Thornwell donated to the society. Cooper's proslavery works *Manual of Political Economy* (1833) and *Introductory Lecture to a Course of Law* (1834) were also popular, as well as Lieber's *Political Ethics*. These works prepared the college boys for the Southern leadership positions they would assume as adults.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁶ Clariosophic Society Minutes, June 3, 1848, SCL; Euphradian Society Minutes, Nov. 19, 1825 and May 5, 1827, SCL.

⁶⁶⁷ Clariosophic Society Library Records, 1856-1860, SCL; Clariosophic Society Minutes, April 1847 and Nov. 18, 1848, SCL.

⁶⁶⁸ Euphradian Society Library Records, 1840s, SCL.

D. The Civil War

1) Alumni and Student Service

SCC alumni's devotion to Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber's principles gave way to its logical conclusion: involvement in the Civil War. 1852 graduate Youmans attested, "Nothing could be more strikingly significant of the unrestricted dominance which the principle of State sovereignty held over the men who had been educated at the South Carolina College, than their heroic conduct shown on fields of carnage, from the commencement to the end of the War Between the States." The young men believed that South Carolina was, indeed, their nation rather than the United States, a sentiment Preston had expressed in Europe in the 1810s. "Their feeling of State loyalty was akin to that which in the old world gives so chivalrous a tinge to loyalty to the crown. It was not a mere thing or policy – it was a creed, a religion." Youmans stated that the South's "political religion...was exemplified in blood on every battlefield. For it a life was offered for every vote cast, and for it 12,000 sons of South Carolina laid down their lives exultingly." What Cooper started, and Preston, Thornwell, and Lieber continued through their lectures and writings in SCC's classrooms, the whole Southern region finished on the battlefield, and, in the end, finished itself.⁶⁶⁹

In 1860, the students formed the SCC Cadet Corps. If war occurred, the close-knit student body planned to defend their state together. Iredell Jones, first lieutenant in the SCC Cadet Corps, later discussed their preparation. The young men invested in "a pretty gray uniform," while the state provided the cadets "with arms and accoutrements." The cadets "had pride in themselves, in the College and a fervent love for the mother State." These feelings increased "as the threatened dangers to their State grew greater." In

⁶⁶⁹ Youmans, "Historical Signification of the South Carolina College," 163.

December, 1860, the month that South Carolina seceded from the Union, 106 students out of a total of 143 joined the cadet corps. Without the faculty's permission, the cadets departed for Charleston in April, 1861, to fight against the federal government at Fort Sumter. Although their services were not required for the actual battle, the SCC students remained in Charleston for three weeks of training. SCC professor Robert Barnwell traveled to serve the young soldiers as chaplain. He praised their orderly behavior: "As a professor, I have always been proud of my pupils, but I must confess that I have never known how just...this pride [was] until I became their chaplain on Sullivan's Island," he avowed. Bestowing high terms of Southern praise, he stated that their behavior was "like that of a soldier and gentleman."⁶⁷⁰

After the three weeks of training ended, the cadets returned to their classes, but would not remain at college for long. Students left periodically to join the Confederate armed forces. When school reconvened in October, the seventy-five students who returned to school resumed their SCC Cadet Corps, electing mathematics professor Charles Venable their captain. When Union troops took Port Royal, former cadet Washington Clark later remembered that the cadets, "by a unanimous vote, offered their services to Governor Pickens for coast defense." The governor agreed, and the young men departed the school in a body for the coastal area. In November 1861, the trustees, including Thornwell, and faculty went against college regulations, moving to give diplomas to those of the Senior Class "as in their opinion, under existing conditions,

⁶⁷⁰ Iredell Jones, "The South Carolina College Cadets," in *The News and Courier*, Dec. 19, 1901, reprinted in Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, Appendix; Robert Barnwell, "Our College Boys" in Minutes of the Board of Trustees, May 7, 1862, SCL.

should receive Diplomas.” Evidently, the College did not want to penalize those seniors who were fighting for the “republic” of South Carolina.⁶⁷¹

In May 1862, faculty member Maximilian LaBorde reported approvingly, “The young men of the college were fully alive to the importance of the struggle which is now going on and it was impossible to resist the impulses of a patriotism which demanded a[n] effort to drive from our soil the insolent and malignant foe.” He remembered that several of the students had departed as early as November 1861 “for the Sea Board.” LaBorde explained to the trustees that the entire junior and senior classes enlisted on March 8, 1862, and that the faculty, accepting the inevitable, stopped ringing class bells the following week because no students were present to answer its call. “There was then an intermission of classes,” he wrote. Limited instruction continued for freshmen and sophomores. By the next trustees’ meeting in November 1862, the college doors had been closed for some time. LaBorde’s report proclaimed in a melancholy note, “We mourn the death of the many gallant youth – the hope of the State – who went forth from these walls to meet the invading foe.” He proudly added, “Here they were trained to all that is noble, and generous and patriotic.” Alumnus Washington Clark testified at the SCC Centennial Celebration in 1901 that, although the students could not “go to the front in an organized body” as they would have preferred to do, “the individual student” made significant contributions, including distinction in rank of service and death on the battlefield.⁶⁷²

The alumni served conspicuously on the Confederate side in the Civil War. Antebellum SCC alumni became “distinguished and famous soldiers, and from their

⁶⁷¹ Robert Barnwell’s Report, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Nov. 27, 1861, SCL.

⁶⁷² Maximilian LaBorde’s Report, May 7, 1862 and Nov. 18, 1862, in Minutes of the Board of Trustees, SCL; Washington Clark, “South Carolina College Cadets in the War, Centennial Celebration,” S.C. College, Dec. 20, 1901, reprinted in Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, Appendix; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Nov. 27, 1861, SCL.

ranks came twenty general officers, including one lieutenant general, three major generals, and sixteen brigadiers,” Hollis explains in his college history. “The College furnished the Confederacy with many flaming colonels...scores of majors, captains and lieutenants, and, serving with perhaps less distinction but with no less courage and devotion were the privates and non-commissioned officers.” Iredell Jones, himself a “captain in the Confederate army,” testified “that all South Carolina College men who were physically able did service in the army of the Confederacy.” The exact number of SCC graduates killed in the conflict is unknown, but 160-200 is not an unreasonable estimate, and the number could well be higher. In an incomplete but lengthy list, Andrew C. Moore, an early 20th century SCC professor, detailed the deaths of 122 alumni who served the Confederacy. This roll, although it includes a few of the high-ranking officials such as States Rights Gist and former governor John Hugh Means, primarily paid tribute to the privates and lower-ranking soldiers who, although not as influential, nonetheless gave their lives for states’ rights and South Carolina, as their SCC professors had encouraged them to do.⁶⁷³

2) Redeemer Period

Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber instructed many students who served in South Carolina’s government after the Civil War. Between 1875 and 1910, South Carolina’s elite, styling themselves “Redeemers,” busily worked to demolish the Radical Republican reforms that occurred during Reconstruction (1865-1877.) During this era, the state’s antebellum aristocracy strove to re-implement their racist ideology so that their freed slaves would, once again, occupy a subordinate position. Wade Hampton, who

⁶⁷³ Hollis, *South Carolina College*, 228-229; A.C. Moore, “Alumni of the SCC Who Died in the Service of the Confederacy”, *Bulletin of the University of South Carolina*, XII (Jan. 1908,) reprinted in Green, *History of the University of South Carolina*, 1916, Appendix.

studied with both Cooper and Lieber as an 1836 graduate, was quite prominent in Redeemer politics. His contemporary and admirer, P.M. Hamer, spoke about Hampton's state leadership at the 1901 SCC centennial celebration. Hampton's service as a Confederate general was only the beginning of a long political career. In 1876, he "came forward as the champion of white supremacy and Democratic rule in South Carolina, being elected Governor," P.M. Hamer stated. After serving a second gubernatorial term, he represented the state from 1879-1891 in the United States Senate, "where his presence was an honor even to that distinguished body," Hamer praised. In his opinion, Hampton was "South Carolina's greatest man."⁶⁷⁴

SCC alumnus J. H. Hudson also lauded Hampton's role in flowery Victorian language. "During Radical rule in South Carolina, the old College fell into disrepute, and practically ceased to exist," he lamented, still a Confederate despite the Union's victory. "In 1876, under the leadership of that great hero and statesman, Wade Hampton," South Carolina's "people rescued the government from the rule of the carpet bagger and the negro, and restored it to the white men of the State." In addition, Hudson, who had also been trained in racist opinions at SCC, remarked, Hampton also proved instrumental in "reopen[ing] the College and restoring it to the [white] people."⁶⁷⁵

Youmans, class of 1852, stated his belief that Hampton was one of the two most valuable men the College had ever produced. Avowing that Hampton was a paternalist slaveholder before the war, Youmans proclaimed him "conspicuous among those Southern planters who made out of their negro slaves 'the finest body of agricultural and

⁶⁷⁴ P. M. Hamer, "Sons of South Carolina," in *The Centennial Celebration of the Granting of the Charter to the South Carolina College*, 72.

⁶⁷⁵ J.H. Hudson, "Aftermath of the Banquet," in *The Centennial Celebration of the Granting of the Charter to the South Carolina College*, 95.

domestic laborers that the world has ever seen.” Hampton evidently took his college instruction quite seriously. Although appreciating his political service, Youmans believed that his Confederate service and his work “in the redemption of the State from the domination which followed in the wake of reconstruction” stood far greater still. Hampton, in Youmans’ opinion, restored South Carolina to an equal place in the Union. The SCC alumnus of 1852, who studied under Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber, venerated the statue of the 1836 graduate who had honored Cooper’s teachings. Youmans praised, “The bronze of his statue may moulder [sic] and fade, but he will live forever in the heart of redeemed, regenerated, disenthralled South Carolina.” Youmans cited a particularly strong example of Hampton’s espousal of paternalist thought, which he had learned seventy years before at Cooper’s feet. Hampton prayed near his death in 1902, “All my people, black and white, God bless them all.” Even though the Civil War had freed the slaves, Hampton still made it clear that, in his mind, the blacks of South Carolina were his “people,” still under elite white male domination.⁶⁷⁶

Youmans paid further homage to the SCC alumni as a whole. “[W]hen we think of the number of able and eminent men whom the College has educated and sent forth into the world, who in peace and in war, in the camp and in the Senate, in State Legislatures and Federal Congresses, as Governors, Judges, Chancellors, in all the professions and vocations, in every department of life where education, honor, merit, intelligence, and excellence achieve distinction...have written...their names in characters of living light.” The aging member of the class of 1852 declared that “time will not willingly let [them] die.” He avowed that these alumni were indeed “men to whom the College can point as her jewels.” Recounting their service to South Carolina and the

⁶⁷⁶ Youmans, “The Historical Signification of the South Carolina College,” 170-171.

South, he declared, “gives the greatest historical significance to the South Carolina College” and expressed his opinion “that the purposes, aims and objects of the College have been...accomplished, that the education of youth within its walls has to an incalculable extent contributed to the prosperity of society, promoted the good order and harmony of the whole community, strengthened the friendships of young men, and advanced our political, material, moral, and social union.” This declaration by Youmans in 1901 was similar to a statement Preston had made over fifty years earlier on his inauguration as college president: “Carolina’s jewels – May I say that I helped to fashion them.”⁶⁷⁷

Conclusion

The four professors trained SCC students in proslavery argument and states’ rights doctrine during their forty years at the college. Lieber literally placed Calhoun on a pedestal as an example to his students and required Cooper’s proslavery textbook in his classes. Preston influenced the young men with his fiery speeches at the State House and through his published Senate speeches. Thornwell defended slavery in the classroom by means of carefully crafted lectures. Three of Cooper’s major proslavery writings stemmed directly from his classroom lectures. Their interactions with both college slaves and their own slaves provided a tangible and visible example before the impressionable youth.

Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber’s sphere of influence, spun within their lecture rooms, directly and profoundly impacted their students’ future lives. These young men, who became the political leaders of the state and the region, passionately guided the

⁶⁷⁷ Youmans, “The Historical Signification of the South Carolina College,” 171.

South to secession, and directed and fought the Civil War. While SCC alumni mourned the Confederacy's demise, they regrouped and acted to reinstate what they could of the state's antebellum sociopolitical character between Reconstruction and the early twentieth century.

European experiences not only intensified, but largely shaped, the four professors' proslavery thought. British and Continental working-class misery fueled their commitment to Southern slavery, and the policies of these same governments toward their working classes drove the four ideologues to preserve their ideal Southern republic. Cooper, Thornwell, Preston, and Lieber brought the product of their transatlantic experiences back across the ocean to South Carolina, in turn shaping the thought and action of SCC students for the forty crucial years prior to the Civil War. The professors' European experiences, therefore, directly impacted the course of Southern and American history through their influence on the future Southern elite who directed secession, the Civil War, and the erasure of Radical Republican influence.

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APPENDIX A

CAREERS OF COOPER, THORNWELL, PRESTON, AND LIEBER'S STUDENTS

Alumni/Attendees	Grad/ Left	Professors	Professions & Contributions
Adams, James Pickett	1848	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Addison, George	1837	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Aiken, David Wyatt	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	US Representative - SC, SC Representative
Aiken, James R.	1832	TC	SC Representative
Aiken, Joseph D.	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Aiken, William	1825	TC	SC Governor, US Representative - SC, SC Senator & Representative
Allison, Robert Turner	1821	TC	SC Secession Convention Member
Allston, William J.	1822	TC	SC Secession Convention Member
Anderson, William Wallace	1845	JHT, WCP, FL	US Navy Officer
Arthur, Benjamin Franklin	1845	JHT, FL	Clerk of the SC Secession Convention
Ayer, Lewis Malone	1843	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Bacon, John E.	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	US Chargé d'affaires to Paraguay
Ballard, Henry W.	1826	TC	US Representative - AL, CSA Representative - AL
Barnes, Dixon	1838	JHT, FL	CSA General, SC Senator & Representative, Died at Sharpsburg, 1862
Barnwell, Robert Woodward	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	SCC Professor, Died in Civil War
Beatty, William C.	1822	TC	SC Senator
Bellinger, Edmund	1826	TC	SC Representative

Bellinger, Eustace St. Pierre	1830	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Belton, Richard Stobo	1830	TC	SC Senator & Representative
Black, James A.	1830	TC	SC Congressman
Black, Joseph Addison	1828	TC	SC Senator & Representative
Blakeney, James W.	1831	TC	SC Senator
Blanding, James Douglas	1841	JHT, FL	US Army Officer
Bonham, Milledge Luke	1834	TC	CSA Brigadier General, SC Governor, US Army Officer, SC Representative, SC Solicitor
Bookter, T.C.	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	MS Secession Convention Delegate
Boozer, Lemuel	1830	TC	SC Senator & Representative
Boyce, W.W.	1857	JHT, FL	US Representative - SC, SC Representative, CSA Constitution Signer
Boylston, Robert Bentham	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative, Speaker SC House of Representatives, Colonel CSA
Bratton, John	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, US Representative - SC
Brevard, Theodosius	1822	TC	FL Judge
Brooks, Preston S.	1839	JHT, FL	US Representative - SC, Caned Sumner in the US Senate, 1856
Brumby, Richard T.	1824	TC	University of AL Professor, SCC Professor
Burnett, Andrew W.	1830	TC	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Butler, Matthew C.	1856	JHT, FL	CSA Major General, SC Senator
Butler, Sampson Hale	1821	TC	SC Representative
Caldwell, Patrick Calhoun	1820	TC	SC Senator & Representative
Calhoun, Andrew P.	1832	TC	AL Secession Commissioner
Calhoun, James M.	1824	TC	AL Senator, President of AL Senate during Secession Convention
Campbell, John	1819	TC	US Representative
Campbell, William Hans	1846	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Secession Delegate, Owner <i>Mountaineer Newspaper</i> of Greenville, SC, Instructor at Columbia Male Academy
Cantey, James	1838	JHT, FL	CSA Brigadier General, SC Representative, SC Commissioner of Equity

Carlisle, James H.	1844	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate, Wofford College President,
Cain, Daniel J.C.	1835	TC	College Professor, institution unknown
Carn, Merrick E.	1831	TC	SC Senator & Representative, SC Secession Ordinance Signer
Carroll, Charles R.	1824	TC	SC Senator & Representative
Carroll, James P.	1827	TC	SC Secession Delegate, SC Judge
Caughman, S.P.	1844	JHT, FL	College Professor, institution unknown
Chalmers, James R.	1851	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, US Representative - SC, SC Representative, MS Secession Convention Delegate
Cheves, Langdon	1833	TC	SC Secession Delegate, Died in Civil War
Clark, Ephraim	1833	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Mikell			
Clowney, William K.	1819	TC	US Representative - SC, SC Commissioner of Equity
Coalter, John D.	1825	TC	MO Attorney General
Cohen, Jr., Solomon	1820	TC	US District Attorney, SC Representative, SC Commissioner of Equity
Colcock, William F.	1823	TC	US Representative - SC, Speaker of SC House, Collector of the Port of Charleston, SC
Connor, James	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, US Attorney General - SC, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Cooper, Mark Anthony	1819	TC	US Representative - SC
Crosson, James M.	1844	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Coit, J.C.	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Comptroller General
Darby, Artemus	1826	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Darby, John T.	1856	JHT, FL	SCC Professor
Dargan, George Washington	1821	TC	SC Representative, SC Chancellor, SC Commissioner in Equity, SC Judge, SCC Board of Trustees
Davidson, J. Wood	1842	JHT, FL	Historian
Davis, Henry Campbell	1843	JHT, FL	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Davis, James	1841	JHT, FL	US Army Officer

Dawkins, Thomas N.	1825	TC	CSA Brigadier General, SC Representative, SC Solicitor, SC Judge
Deas, Elias Horry	1821	TC	SC Representative, College Professor, institution unknown
DeLeon, David Camden	1833	TC	US Army Officer
DeLeon, Edwin H.	1837	JHT, FL	CSA ambassador - Britain, US Consul - Russia, Editor of secessionist paper <i>The Southern Press</i> - Washington, D.C., Proslavery apologist
DeSaussure, William Davie	1838	JHT, FL	SC Representative, Died at Gettysburg
DeSaussure, Wilmot Gibbes	1840	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Dugan, George W.	1821	TC	SC Chancellor
Dunkin, Alfred H.	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Dunnovant, Robert G.M.	1842	JHT, FL	CSA Adjutant General, SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate, US Army Colonel
Earle, Samuel M.	1834	TC	SC Representative
Elliott, Stephen	1825	TC	SCC Professor, Bishop of GA
Elliott, Stephen	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General
Elmore, Franklin H.	1819	TC	US Senator & Representative - SC
English, John	1833	TC	SC Representative
English, Thomas	1826	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Evans, Daniel Chesley	1840	JHT, FL	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Evans, John H.	1853	JHT, FL	US Representative - SC, SC Representative, CSA Lieutenant Colonel
Evans, William H.	1839	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Farrow, James	1847	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Representative, SCC Trustee
Fernandis, Walter	1832	TC	SC Representative
Floyd, John B.	1829	TC	CSA Brigadier General, VA Governor
Flud, Daniel	1839	JHT, FL	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Fraser, Peter W.	1822	TC	SC Representative
Fraser, Thomas B.	1845	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Judge
Frierson, John N.	1837	JHT, FL	SC Senator & Representative

Gage, Robert J.	1831	TC	SC Representative
Gaillard, Peter	1833	TC	CSA Colonel, Mayor of Charleston
Gary, Martin W.	1853	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Major General, SC Senator
Gary, Summerfield Massilon Glen	1847	JHT, WCP, FL	FL Secession Convention Member, CA Secession Convention Member, CSA Colonel
Gaston, J.M.	1843	JHT, FL	Atlanta Medical College Professor
Gibbes, Jr., Robert W.	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	SCC Professor
Gibbes, Lewis R.	1829	TC	SCC and Charleston College Professor
Gibbes, Robert W.	1827	TC	<i>DeBow's Review</i> editor, SCC Professor
Gilchrist, James	1839	JHT, FL	AL Legislature, AL Secession Convention Delegate
Gist, Joseph	1837	JHT, FL	CSA Brigadier General
Gist, States Rights	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, Died in Civil War
Gist, William H.	1827	TC	SC Governor, SC Secession Delegate
Glenn, John Edmund	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General
Glover, Mortimer	1856	JHT, FL	Claflin College Professor
Glover, Thomas Jamison	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Representative, SC Judge
Goodwyn, Thomas Jefferson	1820	TC	SC Senator & Representative
Gourdin, Robert Louis	1831	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Govan, William H.J.	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General
Graham, R.F.	1854	JHT, FL	SC Circuit Judge
Graham, William	1841	JHT, FL	NC Governor, US Senator - NC
Gray, Henry	1833	TC	LA Representative
Gregg, Maxcy	1835	TC, FL	CSA Brigadier General, SC Secession Convention Delegate 1852 & 1860
Guy, M.W.	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General
Hammond, Harry	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	University of GA Professor

Hammond, James Henry	1825	TC	SC Governor, US Senator - SC, Proslavery author
Hampton, Wade	1836	TC, FL	CSA Lieutenant General, SC Governor, US Senator - SC, SC Senator
Hanckel, Thomas	1840	JHT, FL	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Harrison, James T.	1831	TC	MS Representative
Harrison, James Washington	1837	JHT, FL	SC Senator
Hay, Charles C.	1833	TC	SC Representative
Hayne, Isaac W.	1827	TC	SC Secession Delegate
Hayne, William Alston	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Henderson, Daniel S.	1826	TC	SC Representative
Hill, Albert P.	1837	JHT, FL	MS Secession Convention Delegate
Hilliard, Henry W.	1826	TC	CSA Brigadier General, US Minister to Belgium, University of AL Professor, US Representative - AL
Hopkins, William	1822	TC	SC Secession Convention
Hudson, Joshua Hilary	1853	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Judge, CSA Lieutenant Colonel
Hudson, James W.	1820	TC	Mount Zion College Professor
Huger, Jr., Daniel E.	1825	TC	SC Judge
Hutson, Isaac McPherson	1839	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Irvin, John F.	1827	TC	SC Governor
Jackson, John King	1846	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General
Jefferies, James	1821	TC	SC Secession Convention
James, George S.	1851	JHT, WCP, FL	Fired first shot of Civil War at Fort Sumter
Jamison, David F.	1827	TC	SC Secession Delegate, SC Judge, SC Speaker of the House, Died in Civil War
Jeter, Thomas B.	1846	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Governor
Johnston, John W.	1837	JHT, FL	US Senator - VA
Jones, C.C.	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	Historian, Author of History of GA
Jones, James	1824	TC	CSA Adjutant General, SC Representative

Keitt, Lawrence M.	1843	JHT, FL	US Representative - SC, Fire Eater, Aided Brooks in Sumner caning, Died leading Kershaw's Brigade in 1864
Kennedy, John L.	1825	TC	College President, institution unknown
Kennedy, John D.	1857	JHT, FL	CSA Brigadier General
King, Henry Campbell	1839	JHT, FL	SC Representative
LaBorde, Maximilian	1821	TC	SCC Professor
Landrum, John J.	1827	TC	SC Secession Delegate
Landrum, John Morgan	1842	JHT, FL	US Representative - LA, Mayor of Shreveport
Leitner, William Z.	1849	JHT, FL	SC Secretary of State
Leitner, Elias C.	1831	TC	SC Representative
Leland, John A.	1837	JHT, FL	The Citadel & Davidson College Professor
Lesesne, Joseph W.	1832	TC	AL Chancellor
Levin, L.C.	1827	TC	PA Legislature, founder of Know-Nothing Party
Lewis, Dixon H.	1820	TC	US Senator & Representative - AL
Lipscomb, James N.	1847	JHT, FL	SC Secretary of State
Logan, John H.	1841	JHT, FL	Historian
Lowndes, James	1854	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Colonel, Surrendered at Appomattox, US Sanitary Commission
Lyles, William S.	1832	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Magrath, Andrew G.	1831	TC	SC Governor, SC Secession Convention Delegate, US Judge - SC, SC Representative
Manigault, Gabriel	1828	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Manly, Basil	1821	TC	University of AL President, Furman University founder, Proslavery apologist
Manning, John Lawrence	1837	JHT, FL	SC Governor, SC Senator & Representative, Secession Commissioner to LA, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Marshall, Henry	1822	TC	LA Senator, LA Secession Convention Delegate
Marshall, Jake Foster	1837	JHT, FL	SC Senator
Martin, Edward Howard	1845	JHT, WCP, FL	College Professor, institution unknown
Mazyck, Alexander	1826	TC	SC Senator, SC Secession Delegate
McGhee, John C.	1821	TC	FL Secession Convention President

McGowan, Samuel	1841	JHT, FL	CSA Brigadier General, SC Representative, US Army Officer, SC Associate Justice
McIver, Henry	1846	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Chief Justice, SC Secession Convention Delegate
McQueen, Alexander	1841	JHT, FL	SC Senator
McPheeters, George	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	MS Senator
Means, John Hugh	1832	TC	SC Governor, SC Representative, SC Secession Delegate, President of SC 1852 Secession Convention, Died in 2nd Manassas, 1862
Melton, Cyrus D.	1843	JHT, FL	SCC Professor
Melton, Samuel	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	US District Attorney, SC Circuit Judge, SC Attorney General
Warren			
Memminger, Christopher Gustavus	1819	TC	SC Representative, SC Secretary of the Treasury, Head of SC Secession Ordinance Drafting Committee
Mitchell, Nelson	1832	TC	SC Representative
Moragne, W.C.	1837	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Moses, Franklin Israel	1855	JHT, FL	SC Governor
Moses, Franklin J.	1823	TC	SC Senator
Neil, Thomas B.	1845	JHT, FL	SC Judge
Nelson, Patrick Henry	1844	JHT, FL	CSA Major General, Died at Petersburg, 1864
Nixon, Henry G.	1819	TC	SC Representative
Noble, Edward	1844	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Norman, John A.L.	1819	TC	SC Representative, College President, institution unknown
Northrop, Claudean Bird	1831	TC	SC Representative
Nott, Josiah C.	1824	TC	Charleston Medical College Professor, Scientist, Racial theorist
Nuckolls, William T.	1820	TC	US Representative - SC
Oswald, John Crosskey	1840	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Owens, Jesse T.	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Palmer, Edward G.	1819	TC	SC Senator
Palmer, John S.	1822	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Palmer, Samuel J.	1826	TC	SC Senator & Representative

Parker, William McKensie	1844	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Patterson, Lewis T.	1830	TC	SC Representative
Patton, Edward L.	1846	JHT, WCP, FL	Erskine College President
Peck, Thomas	1840	JHT, FL	Union Theological Seminary Professor, VA
Pelham, Charles P.	1838	JHT, FL	SCC Professor
Perrin, Thomas Chiles	1826	TC	SC Senator & Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Perry, Madison S.	1830	TC	FL Governor
Phillips, John	1821	TC	SC Secession Convention Delegate
Pickens, Francis W.	1827	TC	SC Governor, SC Senator & Representative
Player, Thompson T.	1822	TC	SC Representative, SC Solicitor
Poelinitz, Charles	1829	TC	CSA Brigadier General
Porcher, Francis P.	1844	JHT, FL	Charleston Medical College Professor
Potts, James J.	1824	TC	SC Representative
Preston, John S.	1830	TC	CSA Brigadier General, SC Representative
Preston, W. B.	1827	TC	US Minister to Spain
Pringle, William Alston	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Raley, John R.	1854	JHT, FL	Adger College Professor
Raoul, Alfred	1833	TC	SC Representative
Rice, James Farrow	1833	TC	AL Senate, Chief Justice AL Supreme Court, Newspaper editor
Richardson, John Peter	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Governor, SC Representative
Richardson, John Smythe	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	US Representative - SC, SC Representative
Rion, James H.	1851	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Jurist
Rivers, William J.	1841	JHT, FL	Washington College President - MD, SCC Professor
Robertson, Thomas J.	1843	JHT, FL	SC Senator
Seabrook, Ephraim M.	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Seibels, John Jacob	1836	TC, FL	US Chargé d'affaires
Simmons, Francis Yonge	1822	TC	SC Senator

Simons, James	1833	TC	CSA Brigadier General, SC Speaker of House. SC Representative
Simonton, Charles Henry	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	US District & Circuit Judge, SC Representative, CSA Colonel
Simpkins, Arthur	1836	TC, FL	SC Commissioner of Equity
Simpson, William Dunlap	1843	JHT, FL	SC Governor, SC Lieutenant Governor, SC Representative, SC Chief Justice, CSA Colonel
Sims, J. Marion	1832	TC	Physician, Founder of modern gynecology
Sims, Joseph Stark	1819	TC	SC Representative
Sloan, J.T.	1831	TC	SC Representative
Smith, W.W.	1854	JHT, FL	KS Judge
Smith, Whitefoord	1830	TC	Wofford College Professor
Spain, Albertus C.	1841	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate, Secession Commissioner to AR
Spratt, Leonidas	1840	JHT, FL	SC Senator, Secession Commissioner to FL, SC Secession Convention Delegate, editor of <i>Charleston Standard</i>
Springs, Andrew Baxter	1839	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Sullivan, Charles Pinckney	1833	TC	SC Senator, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Taber, William Robinson	1840	JHT, FL	Editor of <i>Charleston Mercury</i>
Talley, A.N.	1848	JHT, FL	SCC Professor
Taylor, Alexander R.	1830	TC	SC Representative
Taylor, William J.	1826	TC	SC Senator
Thomas, W.M.	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Circuit Judge
Thornwell, James Henley	1831	TC	SCC President and Professor, Presbyterian Synod leader, Proslavery author
Townsend, Charles Pinckney	1854	JHT, FL	SC Representative, SC Judge, SC Assistant Attorney General
Tradewell, James D.	1830	TC	SC Representative
Trapier, James Heyward	1833	TC	CSA Brigadier General
Trotti, Samuel Wilds	1832	TC	SC Representative
Walker, James M.	1830	TC	SC Representative
Wallace, John	1834	TC	SC Representative

Wallace, William Henry	1849	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, SC Representative, Speaker SC House of Representatives, SC Judge
Wardlaw, Francis Hugh	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Secession Delegate, Author of the Southern Declaration of Independence
Waul, Thomas N.	1831	TC	CSA Brigadier General, TX Congressman
Wescoat, Jabez R.	1831	TC	SC Representative
West, Charles Shannon	1848	JHT, WCP, FL	TX Legislature, TX Supreme Court Justice
Wharton, John H.	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, TX Representative
Wigfall, Lewis T.	1837	JHT, FL	CSA Brigadier General, TX Senator, CSA Constitution Signer, Fire Eater
Wilkinson, Daniel J.J.	1840	JHT, FL	SC Representative
Williams, Jeremiah Norman	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	US Representative - AL, AL Representative, CSA Major
Williamson, George	1850	JHT, WCP, FL	LA Senator
Wilkins, Samuel B.	1820	TC	SC Representative
Wilson, William Blackburn	1846	JHT, WCP, FL	CSA Brigadier General, SC Congressman, SC Secession Convention Delegate
Withers, Thomas Jefferson	1825	TC	SC Solicitor, SC Secession Delegate
Witherspoon, George McC.	1832	TC	SC Senator
Witherspoon, Sr., Isaac Donnom	1822	TC	SC Lieutenant Governor
Witherspoon, Jr., Isaac Donnom	1854	JHT, FL	SC Judge
Witherspoon, John Benoni	1820	TC	SC Representative
Witner, Joseph R.	1852	JHT, WCP, FL	SC Judge
Woodward, Joseph A.	1827	TC	US Representative
Woodward, Thomas	1827	TC	US Representative - AL
Yeadon, Richard	1820	TC	SC Representative, Charleston newspaper editor
Youmans, Leroy F.	1852	JHT, FL	US District Attorney, 1870 Union Reform Movement
Zimmerman, John P.	1821	TC	SC Senator & Representative

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