

## Chapter Five



### White Nationalism: “Free Soil” and the Ideal of Racial Homogeneity

**MID-CENTURY ROMANTIC** racialists, it has been suggested, were of two minds on the question of the American Negro's ultimate destiny. Those most radical in their abolitionism saw the blacks as permanent Americans who would make a special and valuable contribution to national life and character; the more conservative admirers of the Negro's "natural" Christianity believed that his only fulfillment would take place in Africa, and they therefore supported colonization as both necessary and desirable. This latter strain of romantic racialist thinking gained momentum in the 1850s, as part of the growing segment of Northern opinion that opposed slavery but resisted the radical abolitionist demand that the black population be accepted after emancipation as a permanent and participating element in American society. Supporters of this broader antislavery consensus often harbored the image of a future America that would be all white, or nearly so. But most who cherished such a vision had no romantic expectations about a black millennium in Africa; they were mainly or even exclusively concerned with the national "purification" and homogeneity that allegedly would result from the narrow localization or complete disappearance of an "inferior" and undesirable Negro population.

Some perspective on the overtly Negrophobic or exclusionist

facet of the antislavery or "free soil" consciousness can perhaps be gained by recognizing it from the outset as an open manifestation of a deep-seated and long-existing desire on the part of many white Americans for a racially homogeneous society. H. Hoetink, a Dutch sociologist and student of comparative race relations, has contended that every distinct racial group in a "segmented society"—one in which race is a determinant of social position—harbors a desire for "homogenization," which can mean either intermarriage or the actual or symbolic elimination of the other racial segment or segments. He attributes the desire for homogenization partly to the fact "that the different segments derive from homogeneous societies." This "psycho-social force" is an indication of the "pathological" nature of racially hierarchical societies, and is inevitably "reflected in the minds of those who speculate on the fate of their society." The hope for racial uniformity seems to have taken a form in New World "segmented societies" of Northwest European origin different from that which it has manifested in Latin America. According to Hoetink, homogenization through intermarriage has become both an aspiration and a long-range possibility in the societies of Iberian origin but has been traditionally ruled out in English, Dutch, and French colonies. If this is true, one would expect that in English North America the white desire for homogeneity would be reflected most dramatically in expectations of Negro removal or elimination.<sup>1</sup>

It may be objected, however, that slaveholders and other

1. Harmannus Hoetink, *The Two Variants in Caribbean Race Relations: A Contribution to the Sociology of Segmented Societies* (London, 1967), pp. 106-110, and *passim*. My own findings on the racial thinking of the nineteenth century bear out Hoetink's implication that a hope for homogeneity by some means other than intermarriage has been an important element in white racial speculation throughout all or most of American history. But he may place too much stress on original and permanent "somatic norm images" as a cause of the differing expectations in societies of West European as opposed to Iberian derivation. That English settlers had complexions that really did contrast more sharply with those of Negroes than was the case with the more swarthy Spanish and Portuguese colonials may be of some significance, but it is impossible to know how much weight to give to the psychological effects of color per se until a further comparative analysis is made of purely sociological factors such as demography, class structure, and patterns of settlement.

Americans who exploited the Negro economically or socially had no desire to get rid of the black population. Hoetink says that those whose economic or social position necessitates a subservient racial group, or groups, achieve a kind of "pseudo-homogeneity" by regarding "the other segments" as "foreign bodies, outsiders, even aliens." In the nineteenth-century South, as we have seen, the presence of an egalitarian ethos seemed to require that the Negro be regarded, not merely as an alien, but as a creature not quite human.<sup>2</sup>

In nineteenth-century America, North and South, the equivalent of Hoetink's "pseudo-homogeneity" was often affirmed in the context of opposition to "amalgamation," or intermarriage. In the United States the racial ideal was of course lily-white, and legal barriers to intermarriage certified black exclusion from the "real" community, within which men and women were free to marry by choice. As James Kirke Paulding put it in 1836, amalgamation of the races would "destroy the homogeneous character of the people of the United States, on which is founded our union, and from which results nearly all those ties which constitute the cement of social life."<sup>3</sup> It never occurred to Paulding that the mere presence of the Negro as a slave in the South and a social pariah in the North in any way contradicted the notion that Americans were racially homogeneous. With the development in the 1840s and 1850s of scientific race theory and a new sense of Caucasian or Anglo-Saxon racial pride, it became possible to articulate such a concern for continued "homogeneity" with greater authority. In 1857 J. Aitken Meigs, professor at the Philadelphia College of Medicine and a leading disciple of Samuel George Morton, gave a scientist's view of the danger to the nation that would result from the fusing of diverse races. "As long as the blood of one citizen . . . differs from that of another," he asserted, "diverse and probably long forgotten forms would crop out . . . as indications of the past, and obstacles to the assumption of that perfectly homogeneous character which belongs to pure stocks alone." Meigs went on to cite Gobineau on

2. *Ibid.*, p. 110. See also Chapters Two and Three, above.

3. James Kirke Paulding, *Slavery in the United States* (New York, 1836), p. 64.

the national degeneracy that inevitably sets in when a people fails to preserve its "leading ethnical principle" and concluded that Americans needed to "provide intelligently for the amelioration of that disease whose seeds were planted when the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed and whose deadly influences threaten, sooner or later, like the Lianes of a tropical forest, to suffocate the national tree over which they are silently spreading."<sup>4</sup>

The "pseudo-homogeneity" that could be attained by the exclusion of the Negro from the community of citizens, through enslavement, patterns of discrimination, and ultimately through the absolute prohibition of intermarriage, did not satisfy all segments of anti-Negro opinion in the pre-Civil War period. Aberrant Southerners like J. J. Flourney and Hinton Rowan Helper objected openly to the physical presence of blacks, however lowly and subordinate they might be, and advocated deportation of the entire race.<sup>5</sup> Such thinking was much more common in the North, which lacked a direct dependence on Negro labor and consequently manifested a tendency to look on the free blacks as superfluous population. Negro exclusionist sentiments were particularly strong in the Midwest, where there were various efforts in the 1840s and 1850s to prevent Negro immigration and to remove the blacks who were already there. In 1851 Indiana prohibited all Negroes from entering the state, and Illinois followed suit in 1853. At about this same time, the Midwest saw an upsurge of the kind of colonizationist activity

4. J. C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, eds., *Indigenous Races of the Earth* (Philadelphia, 1857), pp. 251-252. Meigs's reference to the Declaration of Independence is a little obscure, but presumably he was referring to its claim that "all men are created equal"—a doctrine which, if literally applied, might threaten what Meigs conceived of as the racial integrity of the nation.

5. See E. Merton Coulter, *John Jacobus Flourney: Champion of the Common Man in the Antebellum South* (Savannah, 1942); and Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, ed. George M. Fredrickson (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. xxxi, 97, 182. Flourney, a Georgian who published his views in pamphlet form in the 1830s, was a half-mad local eccentric whose theories were hardly noticed in the South. Helper's expulsionism is more significant because his doctrines attracted great attention and may have expressed the otherwise unarticulated desires of many nonslaveholding whites. But Helper's greatest visible impact was on Northern free-soil enthusiasts.

that was openly and explicitly concerned with simply getting rid of the local free Negroes by sending them anywhere outside the United States.<sup>6</sup>

A leading Midwestern intellectual who articulated his section's desire to be all-white was Dr. Daniel Drake, physician, scientist, and central figure of Cincinnati's literary and cultural life. In a series of letters written to the *National Intelligencer* in 1851 Drake offered the following proposition: "The free States should not hereafter permit negroes, or their descendants of mixed blood, citizens of Liberia excepted, to reside in, pass through, or even visit them; and the slave States should forbid emancipation, except a guaranty be given that the liberated should not seek the free states." He made this proposal, Drake explained, because of his belief "that we do not *need* an African population. That these people whether bond or free, are, in every part of the United States, a serving people, parasitic to the white man in propensity, and devoted to his menial employments." The influx of European immigrants, he pointed out, had removed the need for blacks as servants, and there was in fact nothing else they could do. The Negroes who lived in the Northern states were troublesome and thoroughly disliked, and therefore responsible for provoking whites to violence and disorder; they had no hope of attaining a position that was "either elevated or secure." Drake's long-range answer to the race problem was colonization or deportation, and if the North refused to absorb the South's excess black population, such a solution would eventually be forced on the Southern states. In the meantime, however, the best policy was "not only to leave all *slaves*, but all *negroes* (those now in the North excepted) to the management of the South."<sup>7</sup>

Drake spoke for many in his region in expressing the fear that, unless something were done, the Midwestern states might at some point be inundated by a flood of Negroes pouring across the Ohio River. This sense of a black peril, building up in the South

6. See Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana, Ill., 1967), pp. 44-59.

7. Dr. Daniel Drake, *Letters on Slavery to John C. Warren of Boston, Reprinted from the National Intelligencer, April 3, 5, 7, 1851* (New York, 1940), pp. 29, 31, 32, 34, 37, 54-67.

as slavery reached what were supposed to be its natural limits of expansion, haunted the popular imagination of the Midwest and reached panic proportions when the Civil War brought the prospect of emancipation.<sup>8</sup> The characteristic Midwestern view of race relations was set forth in a relatively temperate manner in the late 1850s by Whitelaw Reid, editor of the Xenia, Ohio, *News* and later the successor to Horace Greeley as editor of the *New York Tribune*. "Where Negroes reside in any great numbers among the whites," Reid wrote, ". . . both parties are the worse for it, and it is to the interest of both that a separation should be made as soon as practicable."<sup>9</sup>

This, of course, was what proponents of colonization from all sections had been saying since the late eighteenth century, when Jefferson described slavery, or any conceivable biracial situation that might replace it, as inherently dangerous and unstable. Colonizationists had always implied that a complete separation of the races was the only satisfactory answer, the only way to fulfill safely and adequately the popular desire for racial homogeneity that was assumed to exist. But something new was added in the 1840s and 1850s, giving greater impetus to the hope for homogenization through the removal or elimination of the Negro. Only in connection with larger historical developments can one understand why speculations which denied Negroes a continued existence in the United States were so frequently ventured and so widely accepted in the North during a period of sectional conflict climaxed by a somewhat reluctant acceptance of Negro emancipation.

One such development was the rise of a new sense of American nationalism that had clear racial overtones. The early promulgation of a concept of white or Anglo-Saxon character that was supposedly synonymous with the American national character has been described above. But the full significance of this growing tendency to identify race and nationality, as well as the kind of applications that were likely to be made of such a correlation

8. Drake, *Letters*, pp. 66-67; V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 17-18.

9. Quoted in Royal Cortissoz, *The Life of Whitelaw Reid* (New York, 1921), I, 41.

from mid-century on, can best be seen in the public debate that took place between 1846 and 1848 on the question of whether the United States should follow up its victory in the Mexican War by annexing all of Mexico. As the historian Frederick Merk describes this debate, much of it hinged on whether American institutions reflected the needs and capabilities of all men or merely expressed the genius of a particular race, a question which arose because the Mexican population was largely of Indian or "mixed blood." The proponents of "All Mexico" were expansionists who did not believe in colonial dependence, and they argued that American democratic institutions were capable of incorporating and "regenerating" nonwhite races, a thesis that reflected the universalist concept of a democratic future for all mankind up to this time widely accepted as an abstract proposition even though it conflicted with actual American racial practices. The opponents of annexation, on the other hand, arguing that American interests would be well served only if acquisitions were limited to thinly populated areas contiguous to the United States, objected to the incorporation of all Mexico on ethnic grounds.<sup>10</sup>

This latter point of view was presented in classic form by John C. Calhoun in his Senate speech of January 4, 1848. Calhoun, like some other proslavery spokesmen, saw no future for the "peculiar institution" in such an arid country, and he opposed annexation because he regarded Mexicans as an inferior breed. The United States, he pointed out, had never "incorporated into the Union any but the Caucasian race. . . . Ours is a government of the white man. . . . in the whole history of man . . . there is no instance whatever of any civilized colored race, of any shade, being found equal to the establishment and maintenance of free government."<sup>11</sup> Many other opponents of annexation, Northern as well as Southern, expressed the same point of view. They carried the day, because the "All Mexico"

10. Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York, 1963), Chapters VII and VIII, *passim*.

11. From John C. Calhoun's Senate speech against the annexation of Mexico, Jan. 4, 1848, in John C. Calhoun, *Works*, ed. Richard K. Crallé (New York, 1853-1857), IV, 410-411.

slogan failed to rally enough popular support to win its objective. Frederick Merk, who describes the basic position of Calhoun and his supporters as affirming "that the American type of government is a white man's affair," concludes that "the disintegration of the All Mexico crusade seemed to mean that the Southerner and his ideas had triumphed," and that the extremists of Manifest Destiny—those who saw no limit to the areas and populations which the United States and its form of government might incorporate—had suffered a defeat from which they would never fully recover.<sup>12</sup> For the next fifty years, in any case, one of the principal barriers to American expansionism into tropical areas was a reluctance to have anything whatever to do with the "inferior races" that inhabited them. Such a consensus was bound to affect the prospects of American Negroes because it implicitly defined the racial basis of American citizenship in a way that was incompatible with their assimilation into American life.<sup>13</sup>

Reinforcing such racial limitations on the kind of people who could be incorporated was the concept of a clearly delineated climatic zone suitable for *white* habitation and dominance. When Louis Agassiz, after his arrival in the United States in 1846, applied his theory of "zoölogical provinces" to the races of man, he immediately won wide support for the general concept, even among those who were unwilling to accept the idea that separate human creations had literally occurred in each zone. As he stated his theory in its most general form in 1854, it meant that "*the boundaries, within which the different natural combinations of animals are known to be circumscribed upon the surface of our earth, coincide with the natural ranges of distinct types of man.*"<sup>14</sup> Another scientific writer, who restated the theory in 1860, took it as meaning that the races of mankind "vary in physical and mental structure, in accord with the diverse conditions of the earth's great sections, each constituted to

12. Merk, *Manifest Destiny*, p. 192.

13. *Ibid.*, Chapter XI; see also Chapter Ten, below.

14. Louis Agassiz, "Sketch of the Natural Provinces of the Animal World and Their Relation to the Different Types of Man," in J. C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, eds., *Types of Mankind: Or Ethnological Researches . . .* (Philadelphia, 1854), p. lvii.



flourish best in a climate akin to its native one."<sup>15</sup> What this meant in practical terms was that the Caucasian could have unlimited sway over the temperate regions—an idea which appealed to American racial nationalists who could look upon most of North America as a great Caucasian preserve—but he should be wary of efforts to expand into the tropics, the natural habitat of races differently constituted. The Negro, of course, was seen as the tropical race par excellence. According to John H. Van Evrie, writing in 1853: "The negro is as much a product of the tropics as the orange or the banana, or any other form of existence originally created within these latitudes, and the instinct of his nature prompts, as well as urges, him onward to his original and final home."<sup>16</sup> The identification of the Negro with the tropics, of course, raised questions about his destiny in the United States and provided a theoretical framework within which the "psycho-social" wish for homogeneity could express itself.

## II

The immediate political context which made hopes or expectations for a total separation of the races seem tremendously relevant and significant was the controversy over the future of slavery in the territories, a struggle which began in 1846 with the effort in Congress to enact the Wilmot Proviso, a measure prohibiting slavery in all areas acquired in the Mexican War. This great political conflict was temporarily dampened by the Compromise of 1850, but it broke out anew with the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and thereafter increased in intensity until the election of Lincoln and the secession of the South in 1860 and 1861. Primarily this was a struggle over what kind of institutions—slave or free—would triumph in the Western territories and ultimately in the nation as a whole. In the minds of many Northerners, however, it was also a contest to decide whether

15. Thomas Ewbank, *Inorganic Forces Ordained to Supersede Human Slavery* (New York, 1860), p. 16.

16. John H. Van Evrie, "Slavery Extension," *De Bow's Review*, XV (July, 1853), 6.

white or black populations would predominate in the new areas.

On the precise question that often seemed to be at issue—whether Negro slaves or free white men were destined in the long run to provide the labor for the existing territories—the climatic racialist theory of nationality seemed to provide a clear and unequivocal answer. Van Evrie, who popularized the current scientific race theories as the basis of his defense of slavery as the Negro's "natural condition," held no hope in 1853 for black servitude on a large scale in places like Kansas and Nebraska. In an article for *De Bow's Review*, he acknowledged that laws of population, not the Northwest Ordinance, had kept blacks out of the region north of the Ohio River, an area which possessed a climate "utterly uncongenial to the negro constitution." What was more, he predicted that the northern tier of slave states was destined to be free, as white labor from the North pushed down upon it and drove the blacks southward and closer to their natural habitat. But the prospect of this pressure from a growing white population—fed as it was by immigration from Europe—led Van Evrie to conclude that the South must have "an outlet" for its excess black population. This outlet was to be found in the American tropics and could be provided only by the extension of slavery into those areas; for the Negro supposedly would not work unless enslaved to whites, and the world needed the tropical staples which his labor alone could provide. As Van Evrie envisioned a Caribbean slave empire, the whites would reside in the highlands, while the Negroes occupied "the fertile regions of the coast," where no Caucasians could live permanently but where they could appear often enough to exercise the necessary "control and guidance." He concluded by emphasizing the importance of Cuba, which Southern expansionists were then seeking to have annexed by the United States, and demanded that this fertile island be seized before the British forced the Spanish colonial authorities to emancipate the slaves, an action that would allegedly make the whole Caribbean barbarous and unproductive, a threat to "the subordination of blacks in the Gulf States."<sup>17</sup> Many of the same points were made in 1855 by an anonymous proslavery writer in the *Southern Literary Mes-*

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-13.

senger, who also argued that slavery was receding southward and would eventually disappear in states like Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The future of American slavery, as he saw it, included not only expansion into the Caribbean but well beyond it, with the greatest future field for "our Anglo-American race with their auxiliaries" being South America, especially the valley of the Amazon.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the fact that intellectual proponents of the expansion of slavery tended to look southward rather than westward, the political opportunities and exigencies of the late antebellum period impelled Southern leaders to make an issue of the status of slavery in areas that they themselves often acknowledged were not very promising as plantation regions. The militant defense of "Southern rights" in the Western territories was probably more than a symbolic gesture, emanating from a defensive preoccupation with regional honor. Some Southerners perceived that the kind of influence over national policy that was required to protect American slavery where it already existed and to provide for its future expansion into Latin America necessitated efforts to maintain a balance of power between slave and free states by gaining political hegemony in the territories. Thus the South was drawn, somewhat reluctantly, into a contest for the control of regions that the North had come to regard as set aside by nature for white men and free labor.

The political free-soil movement, which developed out of Northern anxieties about Southern expansionism and the extension of slavery, combined principled opposition to slavery as an institution with a considerable amount of antipathy to the presence of Negroes on any basis whatever. Representative David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, whose historic proviso of 1846 opened the Northern free-soil campaign, made this conjunction clear when he pleaded "the cause and rights of white freemen," and announced that he "would preserve to free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of my own race and own color, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor."<sup>19</sup> When the Repub-

18. "The Black Race in America," *Southern Literary Messenger*, XXI (November, 1855), 676-681.

19. Quoted in Berwanger, *Frontier Against Slavery*, pp. 125-126.

lican Party came into existence as a vehicle for the free-soil impulse, some Republican leaders not only disavowed any belief in racial equality but asserted openly that theirs was "the white man's party," solely and exclusively concerned with the interests of the Caucasian race.<sup>20</sup> In attacking the proslavery Lecompton Constitution of Kansas in 1858, Senator William H. Seward, the most important Republican spokesman before the election of Lincoln in 1860, warned against "the error which thrusts [slavery] forward to oppose and resist the destiny not more of the African than that of the white races." "The white man," he continued, "needs this continent to labor upon. His head is strong, and his necessities are fixed. He must and will have it."<sup>21</sup> Where this left the Negro was revealed in a Republican campaign speech Seward delivered in Detroit in September, 1860: "The great fact is now fully realized that the African race here is a foreign and feeble element, like the Indians incapable of assimilation . . . and it is a pitiful exotic unnecessarily transplanted into our fields, and which it is unprofitable to cultivate at the cost of the desolation of the native vineyard."<sup>22</sup>

Seward's political statements reveal something about the general drift of racial thinking, because they demonstrate familiarity with the ethnological and climatic theories used to support the notion that all of the United States, or a large part of it, was intended by Providence for the exclusive habitation of the white race. The implications of this point of view were worked out more fully by those free-soil writers and theorists who attempted to envision more precisely the destiny of the American Negro. All of them agreed that blacks had no future in the North, unless artificially introduced as slaves, but they could not quite agree, as it turned out, on what in the long run was likely to happen to them in the South.

One point of view was expressed by ultraconservative Northerners who may have been repelled by some aspects of Southern slavery but had no objection to Negro servitude per se and accepted the racial justification of it. These men were drawn to the

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-132.

21. *Congressional Globe*, 35 Cong., 2 Sess., I, 944.

22. William H. Seward, *Works*, ed. George E. Boker (Boston, 1884), IV, 317.

free-soil movement or Republicanism solely because they opposed the apparent Southern effort in the 1850s to overthrow the tradition of sectional compromise by demanding the unlimited extension of slavery. In October, 1856, George Templeton Strong, an aristocratic New York lawyer and diarist, recorded his support of John Charles Frémont, the Republican Presidential candidate, but added that "party feeling has not changed my views about the abstract right and wrong of the institution of slavery. I still firmly believe that the relation of master and slave violates no moral law. I can imagine a state of society in South Carolina itself that would make the servile condition infinitely better for the black race than any other, especially if you leave out the doubtful possibility of higher development of that race in the future and look merely to their present welfare and happiness."<sup>23</sup>

Another conservative and aristocratic lawyer from the Middle Atlantic states, Sidney George Fisher of Philadelphia, made the fullest exposition of this point of view in his pamphlet *The Laws of Race, as Connected with Slavery*, published anonymously in 1860. Fisher argued that Negroes, as members of an inferior species, were naturally suited to be slaves of white masters wherever the races were in direct contact. He nevertheless went on to oppose any extension of slavery into the territories. As he saw it, the widespread Northern opposition to the South's assertion of a right to carry slave property into newly opened Western areas was based primarily on a belief that "these negroes are not property but men, and bring with them human influences not of the highest order"; furthermore, "whether property or not, they will occupy the land and consume its produce all of which [the Northern white] wants for his own race." Fisher also opposed slavery extension into the tropics on ethnological grounds, arguing that the white man could not effectively colonize an area so unsuited to his physical nature; he would merely degenerate as the Spanish had allegedly done in Latin America. His solution, if it can be called that, was based on the assumption that the deep South had a climate conducive to the maintenance of a black

23. George Templeton Strong, *Diary*, ed. Allan Nevins and Milton H. Thomas (New York, 1952), II, 304.

population; so long as the whites attempted to rule in that area, slavery must be maintained. His long-range expectation, however, amounted to a willingness to write off "the extreme South" as a region for white habitation. Where climate gave the Negro "a permanent foothold," he would multiply faster than the whites: "All facts, all tendencies, all causes, therefore point in one direction—the ultimate ascendancy of the black race in that country favorable to its nature." The deep South was, in fact, already well on its way to becoming a "new Africa." Contending that the history of nations overrun by barbarian races showed the need "to check the extension of Africa in our country," Fisher ended up advocating a drastic containment of slavery to localize "this mass of barbarism" and preserve the rest of the United States for Anglo-Saxon civilization.<sup>24</sup>

An argument with a slightly different twist was advanced in another pamphlet of 1860. In *Inorganic Forces Ordained to Supersede Human Slavery*, Thomas Ewbank, scientist, inventor, and former United States Commissioner of Patents, wrote that some type of Negro servitude was not only the natural consequence of biological inferiority but also a requirement for the cultivation of tropical staples; until, that is, an anticipated technological revolution rendered servile labor unnecessary. But Ewbank objected on unspecified grounds to the particular institutional form slavery had taken in the South and was adamant in his opposition to the extension of slavery into the territories. Lamenting the fact that the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Dred Scott decision had abrogated the Missouri Compromise line between slave and free territories, he charged that it was "a weak point in the slaveholder's code to claim the right to carry the system deep into the temperate zones, since their occupants have an equal right, at least, to say they shall not; otherwise, it would depend on the will of the former whether any part of the earth shall be reserved for white labor—that is, for the perfect development of the white race."<sup>25</sup>

Because men like Strong, Fisher, and Ewbank justified in the

24. [Sidney George Fisher,] *The Laws of Race, as Connected with Slavery* (Philadelphia, 1860), pp. 8–15, 18, 40–41, 27–31.

25. Ewbank, *Inorganic Forces*, p. 14, and *passim*.

abstract some localized form of Negro slavery, they did not express the ideological revulsion to slavery in any clime which was characteristic of many free-soilers. But even those who had come to regard slavery per se as an evil could present a similar argument against "the extension of Africa." In reviewing Fisher's pamphlet, Charles Eliot Norton, a Boston man of letters and close friend of James Russell Lowell, objected to Fisher's description of slavery as the inevitable condition of the Negro but went on to endorse in full his demand for racial containment. Expansion of slavery must be resisted, Norton agreed, because it constituted spreading the influence of an inferior race and enlarging the "transatlantic Africa" which the South had become. He was willing to concede that the South was already lost to white civilization, but the question remained whether the rest of the country "shall be occupied a century hence by a civilized or a barbarous race." For him as for Fisher, the essence of the Northern free-soil position was a demand that the Negro be confined at all costs within the deep South.<sup>26</sup>

Norton, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, addressed himself to the prejudices of a portion of the Northern intelligentsia. James Shepherd Pike, a correspondent for Horace Greeley's popular and influential New York *Tribune*, presented substantially the same case for Negro containment to a wider audience and in conjunction with both a more militant antislavery doctrine and a more visceral kind of anti-Negro sentiment. There was no question about Pike's hatred of slavery as an institution and his hope for its destruction; but he also believed that Negroes were unfit to associate with whites and could never be granted civil equality. Since Negro "fecundity" in the Gulf States meant they could never be "rooted out" of that area, the best policy would be to make sure that they remained there and only there. "The slaveholder is claiming to spread the negro everywhere," Pike wrote in March, 1860, "and the Popular Sovereignty men stand coolly by, and say, 'Let him do it wherever he can.' We say the Free States should say, confine the negro to the smallest possible area. Hem him in. Coop him up. Slough him off. Preserve just so much of North America as is possible to the white man, and to free institutions." The ultimate result, Pike hoped, would be not only the

26. *Atlantic Monthly*, VII (February, 1861), 252-254.

death of slavery but also a total geographical separation of the races.<sup>27</sup>

After the outbreak of the Civil War, some Northerners who were willing to concede a slice of the United States for exclusive Negro occupancy became convinced that emancipation would lead naturally to such a result and might even narrow the existing zone of black population. Joseph Henry Allen, a New England clergyman and editor, wrote in a Unitarian journal in April, 1862, on the future of "Africans in America" and concluded that "natural laws" would solve the race question: after emancipation the races would distribute themselves in accordance with "the ethnological laws" discovered by Professor Agassiz. This meant that Negroes would then be concentrated in "a belt of population of purely African type, fringing the gulf-coasts, the low, hot valleys, and semi-tropical marshlands of the South." Since the natural instincts of the Negroes would lead them to abandon higher and cooler regions into which they had been artificially introduced by slavery, large areas of the South would be open to settlement by Northern whites who would redeem these areas from barbarism by introducing "free industry and free intelligence."<sup>28</sup>

### III

Predictions that the containment and eventual disappearance of slavery would bring about a welcome division of the United States into a vast white region and a severely restricted "African belt" were not the ultimate expressions of Northern racial nationalism. The full white-nationalist position, the logical outcome of the desire for racial and institutional homogeneity, was more radical: it pointed ahead to the elimination of the Negro as an element in the population, through planned colonization, unplanned migration, or extermination through "natural" processes. Those unwilling to concede the black man his "foothold"

27. Robert Franklin Durden, *James Shepherd Pike: Republicanism and the American Negro, 1850-1882* (Durham, N.C., 1957), pp. 31-35; *New York Tribune*, Mar. 12, 1860, as quoted in Durden, p. 33.

28. Joseph Henry Allen, "Africans in America," *Christian Examiner*, CCXXXII (April, 1862), 110-112, 121-122.



in the Gulf States argued from a strict interpretation of the climatic theory of race, which made him seem out of place even there. This line of argument was popular in the 1850s among antislavery spokesmen with roots in the Southern and border states. Hinton Rowan Helper, the North Carolinian whose antislavery book of 1857, *The Impending Crisis*, set off a national controversy, wrote: "Instead of its being too hot in the South for white men, it is too cold for negroes, and we long to see the day arrive when the latter shall have entirely receded from their uncongenial homes in America and given full and undivided place to the former."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Francis P. Blair, Jr., Republican leader in Missouri in the late 1850s, made it clear in an 1859 speech that the idea that there were parts of the South where white men could not work was pure myth. "Our whole country is in the temperate, not the torrid zone . . .," he pointed out as part of his rationale for Negro expatriation.<sup>30</sup>

The belief that the entire nation, and not just the major portion of it, was set aside by laws of ethnology for the exclusive use of the white race was clearly implied in Seward's statement of 1858 that the white man "needs this continent" and in his 1860 description of the Negro as "a foreign and feeble element . . . a pitiful exotic, unnecessarily transplanted into our fields, and which it is unprofitable to cultivate . . ." The Civil War brought authoritative statements of white continentalism that were even more explicit. In 1862, a Republican-dominated House committee concerned with emancipation and colonization concluded in its official report "that the highest interests of the white race, whether Anglo-Saxon, Celt, or Scandinavian, require that the whole country should be held and occupied by these races alone"; for "The Anglo-American looks upon every acre of our present domain as intended for him and not for the negro."<sup>31</sup> Significant in Republican and free-soil thinking of the

29. Helper, *Impending Crisis*, p. 299.

30. Frank [Francis] P. Blair, Jr., *The Destiny of the Races of This Continent. An Address Delivered before the Mercantile Library Association of Boston . . .* (Washington, D.C., 1859), p. 27.

31. *Report on Emancipation and Colonization*, 37 Cong., 2 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 148, 13-14, 16, as quoted in Robert H. Zoellner, "Negro Colonization: The Climate of Opinion Surrounding Lincoln, 1860-1865," *Mid America*, XLII (July, 1960), 134.

late 1850s and well into the Civil War, it appears, was a militant racial nationalism, an expectation of white expansion into every corner of the nation, with the disappearance of the Negro as the inevitable corollary.

The new climatic racial determinism was one factor in reviving interest in various emigration and colonization schemes for Negroes during the 1850s, as was the effect of romantic racialism in reviving interest in Africa. In addition, a small amount of support for emigration resulted from the frustration and pessimism of abolitionists, who were responding to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and subsequent judicial decisions which appeared to undermine the legal rights and personal safety of Northern free Negroes. In 1851 James G. Birney, a leading abolitionist, reluctantly recommended to Negroes that they emigrate, pointing out that hopes for equality in the United States seemed to be receding.<sup>32</sup> The decade that followed saw a growth of interest in voluntary expatriation among Negro leaders who had given up on the abolitionist promise of American equality. But many free blacks refused to be turned aside from their campaign for full rights as American citizens.<sup>33</sup> For maintaining this antiemigrationist point of view, they were sometimes chided by the free-soil press, which found a lamentable lack of realism and practical initiative in Negro rejection of colonization. In an 1853 editorial in the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley, who represented a militant wing of the burgeoning free-soil movement, defended colonization on the grounds that the Negro race must prove itself abroad before it could expect its claims for equality to be recognized in America. ". . . the blacks," he wrote, "will never attain the position they aspire to in this country until they have nobly achieved a like position out of it."<sup>34</sup> In 1860 the *Springfield Republican*, another leading Republican journal, made an even harsher indictment of American blacks for their failure to prove themselves by establishing successful colonies outside the United

32. James G. Birney, *Examination of the Decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Case of Strader, Gorman and Armstrong vs. Christopher Graham*, . . . Concluding with an Address to the Free Colored People, Advising Them to Remove to Liberia (Cincinnati, 1852).

33. See Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York, 1969), pp. 215-222.

34. *New York Tribune*, May 31, 1853.

States: "When the negro himself shall demonstrate to the world the spirit, enterprise, and power necessary for founding and governing and establishing a thrifty colony, the first step will have been taken toward the Universal emancipation of the African race."<sup>35</sup>

Such endorsements of colonization did not close the door entirely on future black equality in America, although they seemed to postpone it to a remote day. It was otherwise with the late antebellum movement dedicated to developing a government-sponsored colonization program. In 1858 a group of Congressional Republicans, led by Representative Francis P. Blair, Jr., of Missouri and Senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin, introduced legislation to subsidize Negro colonization in Central America. To some extent this was a political maneuver designed to help the Republican Party counter the charge that it was pro-Negro. But there is no reason to believe that the supporters of the measure were insincere in their belief that colonization was the best policy that the government could follow in regard to the black population.<sup>36</sup> The proposal was explained and defended by Blair in a speech in Boston in 1859. He made his basic attitude unmistakably clear by describing "that sable race, bred in the pestilence of Africa," as "a blot on the fair prospect of our country." Negro inferiority, he argued, did not justify slavery, but it was "a conclusive argument against blending the two races then in the same community, to deteriorate the superior by admixture or contact with the inferior races. . . ." His solution, he pointed out, was in accordance with the doctrine that "the marked distinctions between the races indicate [an] adaptability to various climates of our earth, as plainly and conclusively as the vegetable life of each zone proclaims the climate which produced it." In his opinion, colonization of blacks in Latin America would restore them to a congenial climate that was more accessible than Africa, and, more importantly, make the United States a unified and homogeneous nation: "Deliverance

35. Reprinted in the *Liberator*, April 31, 1863.

36. See Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 272-273; and Berwanger, *Frontier Against Slavery*, pp. 131-132.

. . . from a people who cannot assimilate with our people, the subjects of an institution utterly abhorrent to our free institutions, is the natural and easy mode of restoring symmetry to our political system, and equality among the people and States of the Union"; it would guarantee the "homogeneous institutions" needed "to make our Union perpetual." To Blair and his supporters the mere presence of the Negro constituted a threat to American nationality.<sup>37</sup>

Blair's proposal and the reasoning behind it were endorsed by several prominent Republicans, including Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, who said in a speech supporting the scheme that the Republicans, as "the white man's party," wished "to settle the territories with free white men" and believed that the blacks "should not be among us," that "it would be better for them to go elsewhere." Blair's general proposition even gained the tentative approval of radical antislavery spokesmen like Gerrit Smith and Theodore Parker, who wanted to be sure, however, that emigration would be completely voluntary. In 1860 Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio, a leader of the radical wing of the Republican Party, endorsed negotiations to gain the permission of Central American states to settle blacks from the United States within their borders. Such a policy, he argued, would open up "vast tracts of the most fertile land, in a climate perfectly congenial to that class of men, where the negro will be predominant." He rejoiced in the prospect of a vast black migration: ". . . they will go of themselves and relieve us of the burden. They will be so far removed from us that they cannot form a disturbing element in our political economy."<sup>38</sup>

The belief that the American race problem could be solved by establishing black colonies in Central America or the Caribbean did not die with the outbreak of the Civil War and the expectation of slavery's demise, but was advocated with new urgency as a necessary part of the emancipation process by President Lincoln and other leading Republicans. Lincoln had long been partial to

37. Frank [Francis] P. Blair, Jr., *Destiny of the Races*, pp. 21-22, 4.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 32-33; *The Radical Republicans and Reconstruction, 1861-1870*, ed. Harold M. Hyman (Indianapolis and New York, 1967), pp. 14-15.

colonization; in 1854 and again in 1857, he had endorsed black expatriation as the response to the race question that best reconciled the "self-interest" and "moral sense" of the white population. It was the only policy that promised freedom and independence for the blacks, while at the same time coming to grips with what Lincoln regarded as the unalterable facts of American race relations. As he indicated in a debate with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, "political and social equality between the white and the black races" was impossible. "There is a physical difference between the two," he explained, "which in my judgment will forbid their living together on the footing of perfect equality . . ."<sup>39</sup>

During the first two years of the Civil War, Lincoln labored to combine hesitant steps toward emancipation with a workable plan of colonization. He negotiated for a tract of land in Panama, made an arrangement with the government of Haiti to accept an American Negro colony, asked Congress to appropriate money for colonization, and in December, 1862, called for a series of Constitutional amendments relating to slavery, one of which authorized a government-supported program of colonization.<sup>40</sup> His justification for such a policy remained what it had been before the war. As he told a delegation of Negro leaders in August, 1862, separation was best for both whites and Negroes: "You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. . . . this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence." He recommended colonization in Central America, "especially because of the similarity of climate with your native land—[it] thus being suited to your physical condition."<sup>41</sup> Lincoln had apparently

39. Abraham Lincoln, *Collected Works*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, N.J., 1953-1955), II, 255-256, 409; III, 16.

40. Benjamin Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro* (New York, 1962), pp. 108-123; Zoellner, "Negro Colonization," Paul J. Scheips, "Lincoln and the Chiriquí Colonization Project," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVII (1952), 418-453; Walter A. Payne, "Lincoln's Caribbean Colonization Plan," *Pacific Historian*, VII (1963), 65-72; Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal*, pp. 43-45, 66, 97-98.

41. Lincoln, *Works*, V, 371-373.

absorbed two of the basic principles of Northern white nationalism: that whites and blacks could not live together in equality and that each was biologically suited to inhabit a different region. That colonization proved impracticable, making it necessary after 1863 to seek other means of establishing a racial *modus vivendi*, does not obviate the fact that it was the preferred solution of Lincoln and other Northern leaders.<sup>42</sup>

Implicit in the statements of Republican colonizationists was the notion that the kind of American nationality for which the North was fighting in the Civil War could be fully achieved only by the removal of the Negro. This was made clear in the 1862 House *Report on Emancipation and Colonization*, which advocated colonization on the grounds that "the highest interests of the white race" required that they have sole possession of "every acre of our present domain." In a pamphlet published in 1863, Captain Edward Bissell Hunt, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, made a more abstract and theoretical correlation between Civil War nationalism and Caucasian territorial rights. Hunt, who was a well-known scientist, sought to describe the physical foundations of the Union; or, as he put it in his subtitle, "American Nationality as a Fact of Science." After showing that the nation was a physiographic entity, he went on to discuss the recommendations of science on its future racial composition. He began with the following axiom: "As each animal species has its own limits of habitation on the earth's surface beyond which it cannot flourish, so have the varieties of the human race." The logical deduction was that the United States "is not a natural home for the negro, and he is only here on compulsion. He belongs within the tropics whence he came." But despite the Negro's supposed inability to acclimate, he was very prolific under slavery, which functioned as a kind of domestic breeding system; hence the blacks in the slave states showed "a truly threatening rate of increase," making it a question as to whether "these states shall be hopelessly Africanized" or "reclaimed for the sole use of the white man." Hunt believed that half of the country was at stake and

42. Zoellner, "Negro Colonization"; Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal*, pp. 160, 169, and *passim*.

that "energetic *deportation*" of the blacks was necessary if white America was to fulfill its racial and geographic destiny.<sup>43</sup>

#### IV

Hunt's policy recommendations did not necessarily follow from his "facts of science." If Negroes had been artificially introduced into the South and had been made prolific there only as a result of "the superior sagacity of white men, stimulated by the base profits of slave-breeding and slave labor," then the abolition of slavery, by removing the motives for white nurture, would by itself undermine the continued increase—perhaps even the very presence—of the Southern black population, thereby making "deportation" less urgent or even unnecessary.<sup>44</sup> Another school of "free-soil" or antislavery racial theorists believed that planned colonization, while possibly desirable, was not really essential for the achievement of an all-white America; they placed their primary reliance on natural processes. These men tended to be more radical on the slavery issue than the free-soil colonizationists; some openly advocated emancipation in the South during the 1850s, a time when most Republican leaders were strongly disavowing any intention of interfering with slavery where it already existed. They also tended to argue that the government should take no official colonizationist role, because such action would single out Negroes and constitute a departure from the egalitarian tradition that all Americans should be equal in the eyes of the law and its enforcers. In 1862 Gerrit Smith, an upstate New York abolitionist, spoke for men of this persuasion when he came out against Republican proposals for government-sponsored emigration on the grounds that such matters were

43. Captain E. B. Hunt, *Union Foundations: A Study of American Nationality, as a Fact of Science* (New York, 1863), pp. 48–53. Hunt, who became chief engineer of the Department of the Shenandoah in 1862, was killed in October, 1863. He was a member of several scientific associations and had contributed a number of articles to literary and scientific periodicals. (See George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy* [Boston and New York, 1891], II, 209.)

44. *Ibid.*, 50.

none of the government's concern. "I confess," he wrote in an open letter to Montgomery Blair, Lincoln's Postmaster General and a leading proponent of colonization, "that I am among those who believe that, were Government to allow full play to the law of nature, the blacks would move toward and the whites from the Equator. But government is not to act nor so much as take knowledge of these theories. Its work is to protect those who *for the time being* are its subjects."<sup>45</sup>

Smith's belief that emancipation would inevitably lead to the southward migration of the blacks and presumably to an eventual separation of the races—all without discriminatory action on the part of the government—had long been an article of faith among political abolitionists and free-soil radicals. As early as 1849, Gamaliel Bailey, editor of the *National Era*, a moderate antislavery organ, had justified his advocacy of emancipation on the soil as follows: "We have no doubt that the creator has ordained laws . . . for the distribution of men over the face of the earth. . . . Were slavery abolished today, . . . these laws would begin to operate, and different races of men would seek the latitudes congenial to their constitutions and habitudes. . . ." As a result, "without any violent disturbance or compulsory colonization," the blacks would migrate to the tropics, leaving the whites to occupy the more temperate regions.<sup>46</sup> This belief in a natural and inevitable separation of the races was shared by Salmon P. Chase, the militant free-soil Senator from Ohio, who wrote to the Negro lecturer and writer Frederick Douglass in 1850 that he was opposed to discrimination against blacks but "looked forward to the separation of the races," on the theory that they were "adapted to different latitudes and countries." He thought it likely that "the islands of the West Indies & portions of South America" would be the future home of American Negroes.<sup>47</sup> In the same year another Ohioan, the Reverend Charles Elliott, a leading Methodist clergyman and a proponent

45. *Gerrit Smith to Montgomery Blair* (Peterboro, N.Y., 1862), 3-page broadside. (The italics are mine.)

46. *National Era*, March 22, 1849.

47. Quoted in Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln's Vanguard for Racial Justice* (New York, 1969), p. 29.



of gradual emancipation, published a book on *The Sinfulness of American Slavery*, in which he made the same prediction. "A climate farther South is the object of earnest desire to the colored man," he wrote; and thence he would go if released from thrall-dom, partly because of his natural instincts and partly out of a recognition that he could never achieve in the United States the full equality that could be provided only by white acceptance of intermarriage. Although Elliott denied that color was an "excuse for injustice or wrong of any kind," he felt that white repugnance to genuine "social equality" ran too deep to be removed.<sup>48</sup>

If humanitarians like Smith, Bailey, Chase, and Elliott envisioned the eventual whitening of America as coming through an amicable and painless process of voluntary migration allegedly beneficial to both races, another group of free-soil theorists manifested a more callous attitude toward the future of the blacks. In their opinion the United States would become racially homogeneous through a competitive process which would see the white man pushing his inferior black rival to the wall. Before the Civil War brought the prospect of emancipation as an act of military necessity, spokesmen for this point of view saw emancipation itself as resulting from such competitive pressures and predicted that freedom would be accompanied by the disappearance of the Negro, not so much because he would be happy to move southward but because he would be pushed out or otherwise eliminated in an unequal economic struggle. As the free-soil economist George M. Weston put it in 1857: "When the white artisans and farmers want the room which the African occupies, they will take it not by rude force, but by gentle and gradual and peaceful processes. The Negro will disappear, perhaps to regions more congenial to him, perhaps to regions where his labors can be made more useful, perhaps by some process of colonization we may yet devise; but at all events he will disappear." Weston compared the fate of the Negro to that of the Indians, who were then expected to become extinct shortly, and denied that the

48. The Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D., *The Sinfulness of American Slavery* . . . (Cincinnati, 1857), pp. 214-215. Elliott was presiding elder of the Dayton, Ohio, district of the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church in 1851, when *Sinfulness of American Slavery* was first published. He was also a leader of the antislavery element within Methodism.

disappearance of inferior races in the presence of more vigorous stocks was a catastrophe; it was rather the beneficent result of "laws which nature manifests throughout not only the animal but the vegetable world." The only thing that now prevented Negro "extinction" was the artificial protection provided by the institution of slavery, which was "no scheme of 'nature' but a violation of all moral and natural laws."<sup>49</sup>

Weston's predictions suggest that the "Darwinian" concept of a struggle for existence between the races antedated Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* was not published until 1859. Proslavery writers, of course, had often argued that Negro extermination was the inevitable consequence of emancipation and had used this prediction to make a case for slavery on pseudohumanitarian grounds.<sup>50</sup> They had not anticipated, however, that some Northerners would accept their argument on the results of freeing the slaves and then boldly reply that nature should be allowed to take its course. As early as 1839, Horace Bushnell, a Congregational clergyman and the North's most distinguished theologian, had predicted that the black race would not survive emancipation because it would then be placed in direct competition with the whites. Within fifty years, he predicted, "vices which taint the blood and cut down life" might well "penetrate the whole stock, and begin to hurry them off, in a process of premature extinction; as we know to be the case with another barbarous people, [the Indians] now fast yielding to the infection of death." Bushnell believed that the day of emancipation would be "glorious," especially for the whites: ". . . as to the poor herd who may yet be doomed to spin their brutish existence downward into extinction, it will be a relief to know, that a first day of conscious liberty made them one bright spot, in the compass of a sad and defrauded immortality."<sup>51</sup> In 1860, in a sermon on "The Census and Slavery," he returned to this happy theme and en-

49. George M. Weston, *The Progress of Slavery in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1857), pp. 33, 131.

50. See, for example, Paulding, *Slavery in the United States*, pp. 59-60; and Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Connexion between the Biblical and Physical History of Man* (New York, 1849), p. 18.

51. Horace Bushnell, *A Discourse on the Slavery Question, Delivered in the North Church, Hartford, Conn., January 10, 1839* (Hartford, 1839), pp. 12, 14.

visioned the free white population of the North pushing down on the South and setting off a Malthusian struggle for existence which would end in the disappearance of the blacks. "I know of no example in human history," Bushnell told his congregation, "where an inferior and far less cultivated stock has been able, freely intermixed with a superior, to hold its ground. . . . it will always be seen that the superior lives the other down, and finally quite lives it away. And indeed, since we must all die, why should it grieve us, that a stock thousands of years behind, in the scale of culture, should die with few and still fewer children to succeed, till finally the whole succession remains in the more cultivated race?"<sup>52</sup>

The full intellectual underpinning of Bushnell's prophecy of black extinction was revealed in the 1860 edition of *Christian Nurture*, his classic work on religious education. In a newly added chapter on "The Out-Populating Power of the Christian Stock"—a discussion that was to become an important source for Christian racists and imperialists of the late nineteenth century—he maintained that such acquired characteristics as "good principles and habits, intellectual culture, domestic virtue, industry, order, law, faith" could be transferred biologically from one generation to the next. Once such traits were acquired by a people, they "become thoroughly inbred in the stock"—even specifically religious qualities could become part of the hereditary make-up of a people. "The populating power of any race, or stock," he concluded, "is increased according to the degree of personal and religious character to which it has attained." Hence "any people that is physiologically advanced in culture" is "sure to live down and finally live out its inferior." An inherited capacity for Christian civilization therefore guaranteed the survival of the white race, and the lack of it condemned the Negro to extinction. American racism and American Christianity had at last been thoroughly reconciled!<sup>53</sup>

52. Horace Bushnell, *The Census and Slavery* (Hartford, 1860), p. 12.

53. Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York, 1871), pp. 202, 204-205, 207. (This was a reprinting of the revised edition of 1860.) Bushnell's arguments had an acknowledged influence on the views of the Reverend Josiah Strong, the principal religious proponent of Anglo-Saxon expansionism

Strange as it may seem, Bushnell's basic views on the future of the American Negro were shared by Theodore Parker. Although he was willing to fight for Negro freedom, Parker was unwilling to concede a permanent Negro future in America. Unlike Bushnell, he kept such opinions largely to himself, revealing them only in private correspondence; but his public depiction of the destiny of Anglo-Saxons to expand their domain at the expense of inferior races implied that the blacks would have a difficult time after emancipation.<sup>54</sup> His full view of the matter came out in a letter of 1858 to an English correspondent. In illustrating that "curious law of nature" which dictates that "the strong replaces the weak," Parker described how one kind of New England grass invariably drives out another. "Thus," he continued, moving easily to another sphere of natural competition, "the white man kills out the red man and the black man. When slavery is abolished the African population will decline in the United States, and die out of the South as out of Northampton and Lexington." He also wrote in 1857: "There are inferior races of men which have always born the same ignoble relation to the rest of man and *always will*. For two generations, what a change there will be in the condition and character of the Irish in New England! But in twenty generations, the negroes will stand just where they are now; that is if they have not disappeared."<sup>55</sup>

Elsewhere Parker suggested that black blood might be absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon amalgam through intermarriage. But whether it was miscegenation or merely competitive failure that would lead to the Negro's disappearance as a distinct American race, he was fairly certain he would vanish. And, given his negative view of the essential Negro character, there is no reason to believe that he shed any tears over the prospect, how-

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in the late nineteenth century. When maintaining in 1886 that the Anglo-Saxons were destined to triumph in the coming struggle of the world's races for dominance and survival, Strong quoted Bushnell at length on how an advanced people was "sure to live down and finally live out its inferior." (See Strong, *Our Country*, ed. Jurgen Herbst [Cambridge, Mass., 1963], p. 214.)

54. See Theodore Parker, *Collected Works*, ed. Francis P. Cobbe (London, 1863-1870), VI, 328.

55. Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Theodore Parker: A Biography* (Boston, 1874), pp. 472-473, 467.

ever outraged he may have been by the immorality of slavery.<sup>56</sup>

Predictions of Negro extinction as an acceptable, even desirable, consequence of emancipation continued to be made during the Civil War by men who rejoiced at the impending annihilation of the slave system. In 1862 Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who was in the Army in South Carolina, wrote to his father that, in his opinion, the black race "will be destroyed the moment the world realizes what a field for white emigration the South affords. The inferior will disappear . . . before the more vigorous race."<sup>57</sup>

The following year, the Reverend J. M. Sturtevant, president of Illinois College, wrote in the *Continental Monthly* on "The Destiny of the African Race in the United States," and explained in detail exactly how black extinction would occur. Sturtevant, who was probably influenced by Bushnell, began by conceding that the white prejudice against black equality was insurmountable. Although most Americans believed that slavery was "economically, socially, politically, and morally wrong," the fear of a growing and assertive Negro population was a barrier to general acceptance of the government's emancipation policy. Sturtevant assured those who could not decide which they disliked more, slavery or the Negro, that emancipation would be a safe and easy way to dispose of both. He concluded, "with a high degree of assurance," that "the result of emancipation must be, not the amalgamation of the races, not an internecine war between them, but the inevitable extinction of the weaker race by the competition of the stronger." After citing statistics to show that the American Negro population had never increased except in slavery, he went on to demonstrate why this was so, and why emancipated blacks could be expected to die out. There was always, he pointed out, a "lower stratum" of the population that did not earn enough to support a family; this situation was irremediable because it reflected the operation of "a necessary and beneficent law," which ordained that only "the strongest,

56. See Chapter Four, above, for a discussion of Parker's other racial views.

57. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., to his father, Mar. 11, 1862, *A Cycle of Adams Letters 1861-1865*, ed. Worthington Ford (Boston and New York, 1920), I, 118.

most vigorous, and noblest specimens of the race" would propagate and, conversely, that "the weak, the vicious, the degraded the broken down classes" would be weeded out. After emancipation, the Negro would enter into direct competition with the whites and, because of the superiority of the latter, would be pushed into that "lower stratum." "The consequence is inevitable. He will either never marry, or he will, in the attempt to support a family, struggle in vain against the laws of nature, and his children, many of them at least, die in infancy. . . . Like his brother the Indian of the forest, he must melt away and disappear forever from the midst of us."<sup>58</sup>

Sturtevant's racial Malthusianism anticipated the Darwinian notion of a struggle for existence between the races as well as the "social Darwinist" justification of a *laissez-faire* economy as the arena for a biological competition resulting in the "survival of the fittest." In terms of the racial aspirations of many mid-century American whites, his prediction was an explicit and extreme expression of the ideal of racial homogeneity that was brought to the surface by the sectional conflict. For antislavery racists like Weston, Bushnell, and Sturtevant, this desire for homogeneity led logically to a defense of emancipation as a step toward genocide by natural causes.

## V

The war and the impending collapse of slavery naturally prompted a good deal of speculation on what would happen to the Negro after emancipation. Much of this discussion had an immediate practical significance. Sturtevant's article, for example, was directed at racist opponents of emancipation. Given the respectable intellectual genealogy of his proto-Darwinist view of Negro prospects, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity; but his opinions had propagandistic value for those who were seeking to convince a strongly anti-Negro public opinion that emancipa-

58. J. M. Sturtevant, "The Destiny of the African Race in the United States," *Continental Monthly*, II (May, 1863), 602, 605, 608-609.

tion would not challenge white hegemony in the North. Northern fears of a black inundation had to be countered by proponents of emancipation. Since the race-climate theory was ideal for this purpose, throughout the war antislavery politicians, clergymen, and intellectuals asserted over and over again that the abolition of slavery would not mean a black migration to the North. The ex-slaves would remain in the more congenial Southern climate, and, what was more, free Negroes now in the North would go south, drawn by their natural instincts once the threat of enslavement was completely removed. Hence, in the short run, emancipation and natural processes would whiten the North, and in the long run they might whiten all or most of the South as well.<sup>59</sup>

Many spokesmen were so sure that such predictions would be fulfilled that they saw no need to inquire into the subject very deeply. But not Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, the famous New England physician, philanthropist, and reformer, who in 1863 was appointed by the President to the three-man American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, a body which was instructed to examine the condition of the newly freed blacks and recommend policy in regard to their future treatment. Howe was a radical antislavery man and supporter of John Brown; in his efforts to combine humanitarian moralism with a hardheaded acceptance of scientific conclusions on racial differences, he manifested the same kind of ambivalence shown by Theodore Parker. After his appointment to the commission, he sought to find out the full "facts" in regard to Negro prospects in America. He was ready to allow science to answer the empirical questions because he believed that whatever the future might hold for the black man, such determinations would not obviate the moral imperative to accord him fair treatment.<sup>60</sup>

59. For examples of this point of view see William Aikman, *The Future of the Colored Race in America* (New York, 1862), pp. 25-26; The Reverend Frederick Starr, *What Shall Be Done with the People of Color in the United States?* (Albany, 1862), p. 25; E. H. Derby, "Resources of the South," *Atlantic Monthly*, X (October, 1862), 508-509. See also Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal*, pp. 20-29.

60. For biographical information on Howe, see Harold Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe: Social Reformer, 1801-1876* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956). Howe's work with the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission is described in James M. McPherson's *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 182-187.

As part of his inquiry, Howe directed in writing a series of questions to Agassiz. Of these questions, the one that Howe confessed "occupies me most now" was whether "the African race . . . will be a persistent race in this country? or will it be absorbed, diluted, and finally effaced by the white race . . . ?" He asked further if it was true that the "mulatto is unfertile, leaving but few children, and those mainly lymphatic and scrofulous?" Agassiz's answer to the first query was in harmony with the "permanent foothold" hypothesis; he saw no reason why a population of full-blooded Negroes—he estimated their present number at two million—could not "perpetuate their race *ad infinitum*" in the warmer portions of the South. In reply to the second question, Agassiz not unexpectedly described the mulattoes as a degenerate, sterile, and short-lived breed which would quickly disappear from the population if amalgamation with the whites was arrested. The likely result of emancipation as far as the North was concerned, he concluded, was that "the colored people in whom the negro nature prevails will tend toward the South, while the weaker and lighter ones will remain and die out among us."<sup>61</sup>

Howe was clearly impressed with Agassiz's arguments, which presumably bore out his own suspicions. Although he replied by announcing his intention to defend the legitimate rights of Negroes "though the heavens fall," he had in fact come to the conclusion that sound racial policy and opposition to slavery were perfectly reconcilable. Slavery, Howe pointed out in reply to Agassiz, had "fostered and multiplied a vigorous black race, and engendered a feeble mulatto breed." Many of both types had drifted northward, "in the teeth of thermal laws," to escape servitude; but the complete destruction of slavery would "remove all these disturbing forces and allow fair play to natural laws, by the operation of which, it seems to me, the colored population will disappear from the Northern and Middle States, if not from the continent, before the more vigorous and prolific race." He went so far as to suggest that it would be "the duty of statesmen to favor, by wise measures, the operation of these laws and the

61. Howe to Agassiz, Aug. 3, 1863, and Agassiz to Howe, Aug. 9 and 10, 1863, in Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, *Louis Agassiz: His Life and Correspondence* (Boston and New York, 1890), pp. 592-593, 595, 596-601.



purification and elevation of the national blood." More specifically, he recommended that "mulattoism," which was the same as "hybridism," ought "to be met and lessened as far as may be by wise statesmanship and by enlightenment of public opinion."<sup>62</sup>

Howe's suggestion that the free operation of "natural laws" might lead to the extinction of the Negro in the entire continent as well as in the North implied that he was not entirely convinced of "the permanent foothold" doctrine as put forth by Agassiz, and thought it quite possible that the United States was destined to be all white. In his report published in 1864 describing his personal investigation of the Negro refugee population of Canada—the result of a trip in the summer of 1863—Howe took up this question again. He began by describing the blacks in Canada as a representative sample of the black population of North America; then he noted that most of them were in fact mulattoes and explained this circumstance as the natural consequence of rampant miscegenation on the plantations of the South. For Howe, this mixture of blood was clearly one of the principal evils of the slave system, and he believed that mulattoism had gone so far as to be "widespread among the whole population of the United States," which meant that it had already impaired "the purity of the national blood taken as a whole." His observations of mulattoes seemed to bear out Agassiz's theories; they appeared highly susceptible to disease and relatively infertile: ". . . without the continuance of mulatto breeding, in the South, and fresh accessions of population from that quarter," he contended, "mulattoes would soon diminish in Canada; and moreover, . . . Mulattoism would fade out from the blood of the Northern states." In Canada, he pointed out, intermarriage was rare, and he assured Northern readers that the newly emancipated blacks were not likely to marry outside their own race. "With freedom and protection of their legal rights; with an open field for industry, and opportunities for mental and moral culture, colored people will not seek relationship with whites, but will follow their natural affinity, and marry among themselves." Once given the right "of choosing the soil and

62. Howe to Agassiz, Aug. 18, 1863, *ibid.*, pp. 614–616.

climate most congenial to their nature," those in the North would migrate to the South, where they had a curious fate in store for them: "Drawn by natural attractions to warmer regions, they will co-operate powerfully with whites from the North in re-organizing the industry of the South; *but they will dwindle and gradually disappear from the peoples of this continent.* But surely, history will record their blameless life as a people; their patient endurance of suffering and of wrong; and their sublime return of good for evil to the race of their oppressors."<sup>63</sup>

In Howe's opinion, therefore, most of the Negro population, perhaps all of it, was doomed to disappear because of inherited weaknesses that would put them at a disadvantage in the inevitable competition. The touch of romantic racialism appended to his prediction of Negro extinction—his reference to the blacks' "patient endurance of suffering and of wrong"—suggested how little the "natural" Christian virtues attributed to blacks would actually avail them in the long run. His condescending acceptance of the romantic racialist stereotype also came out in his description of the Canadian fugitives as "a little effeminate, as though a portion of the *grit* had been left out of their composition." ". . . with their African blood," he maintained, "they may have inherited more of womanly than of manful dispositions; for Africans have more of womanly virtues than fiercer

63. S. G. Howe, *The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West, Report to the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission* (Boston, 1864), pp. 18, 26, 33. (The italics are mine.) Howe indicated (p. 83) that he had not been discussing the Negro race as one of the great subdivisions of mankind but only the mulatto "breed" that had developed in the United States as a result of miscegenation on the plantations of the South. Hence his generalizations do not necessarily apply to pure blacks. But he described the Canadian Negroes as "fair representatives of our colored people" with "about the same proportion of pure Africans, half-breeds, quarter-breeds, octoroons, and of others in whom the dark shade grows fainter and fainter . . ." (p. 1), and then discussed the experience of this predominantly mulatto population as indicative of how *Southern* freedmen were likely to respond to emancipation. Howe apparently believed that most American Negroes, in the South as elsewhere, were of mixed blood and suffered from the constitutional weaknesses of such "breeds." Hence the Negro population was likely to diminish after emancipation whatever the fate of a pure black minority of uncertain proportions. Furthermore, it was possible that genuine blacks would go down to extinction with the rest because of the further diffusion of "mulattoism" that would result from future unions between pure-blooded Africans and mulattoes.

people have. Indeed, it may be said that, among the races, Africa is like a gentle sister in a family of fierce brothers." Romantic racialism had in fact helped set the black man up for the kill, in a sense, by denying him the very qualities he would need to survive.<sup>64</sup>

With Howe the racial thinking of an advanced and liberal segment of Northern white opinion received its fullest expression. The limitations of such "egalitarianism" were painfully obvious. Howe was an enemy of slavery and a proponent of legal equality for blacks, but he regarded intermarriage as disastrous, without apparently realizing that such a judgment legitimized a white prejudice that acted as a fundamental barrier to meaningful equality. Furthermore, like so many other whites who stood with him against slavery, he was unable to visualize a permanent future for Negroes in America. His ideal America was all white; he was quite willing to see the Negroes diminish and even disappear after they had served their purpose in Reconstruction. Such friends as these might help free black Americans from slavery, but they could hardly promise full equality. They themselves did not really regard Negroes as potential brothers; they saw them rather as temporary and inferior sojourners in a white America, to be granted "rights," perhaps, but not the deeper acceptance reserved for members of "the more vigorous and prolific race."

64. *Ibid.*, p. 101.