

**THE COMING  
CRISIS,  
CHAPTER 15  
NOTES, PART 1**

# 1850s America

## ⦿ Growing National Identity:

- Widespread belief by Americans that their way of government was superior
- 1850s writing is called the “American Renaissance”
  - American scholars and writers emerging during this decade included:
    - Henry Thoreau
    - Nathaniel Hawthorne
    - Walt Whitman
    - Herman Melville
    - Emily Dickinson

# Nathaniel Hawthorne

- The Scarlet Letter (1850)
- The House of the Seven Gables
- Hawthorne exposed hypocritical aspects of Puritan New England in the colonial period

# Herman Melville

- Moby Dick (1851)
- Melville used the story of Captain Ahab's obsessive search for the white whale to write a profound study of the nature of good and evil

# Frederick Douglass

- Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)
- Douglass told of his life as a slave

# Harriet Beecher Stowe

- ◎ Uncle Tom's Cabin (1851)
  - Stowe used details of slavery from firsthand accounts by northern abolitionists and escaped slaves
  - She was active in anti-slavery work
  - Plot: A Christ-like slave named Uncle Tom endured the cruel treatment of an evil white overseer named Simon Legree
- ◎ Over 300,000 copies sold in the first year and it sold more than 2 million copies in the first ten years
- ◎ Uncle Tom's Cabin served as a call to action for those with anti-slavery sentiment

# Compromise of 1850

North/South political splits were evident by the election of 1848 and the national party system was becoming divided between the North and the South

# Other divisions:

- ⦿ Presbyterians split in 1837
- ⦿ Methodists split in 1844
- ⦿ Baptists split in 1845
  - Southern Baptist Convention still exists

# Congressional Debate

- ◎ July 9, 1850—President Zachary Taylor died of acute gastroenteritis after eating a snack of fruit and cold milk at a Fourth of July celebration
  - Taylor had been prepared to demand a southern compromise if the south had disagreed with the North over slavery, following the lead of President Jackson during the Nullification Crisis
  - VP Millard Fillmore took over as President, but was weak and would not demand a compromise

- John C. Calhoun argued that Congress did not have a constitutional right to prohibit slavery in the territories
- The territories were the common property of the North and South, and slave owners had a right to the protection of their property wherever they moved

- ◎ Daniel Webster took the position that peaceable secession was not possible or desirable and pleaded with abolitionists to compromise to keep the South in the Union

# Liberty Party

(anti-slavery 3<sup>rd</sup> party)

- Leader James Birney in 1844 said that “The slave power” was a group of aristocratic slave owners who not only dominated the political and social life of the South, but also conspired to control the federal government

- ◎ Henry Clay argued for compromise, but left the Senate in ill health
- ◎ Senator Stephen Douglas from Illinois would be the strongest voice for compromise after Clay's departure

# Two Perspectives

- North and South both believed in westward expansion, but this resulted in other problems coming to the surface

# Northern Perspective

- South was an economic backwater dominated by a small slave-owning aristocracy
- Slave system was immoral and hurt the whole nation
- Hurt the economy

# Southern Perspective

- Slavery was a blessing to an inferior race
- Cotton production was an engine of national growth
- Northern business practiced “wage slavery”—working class was worse off than slaves