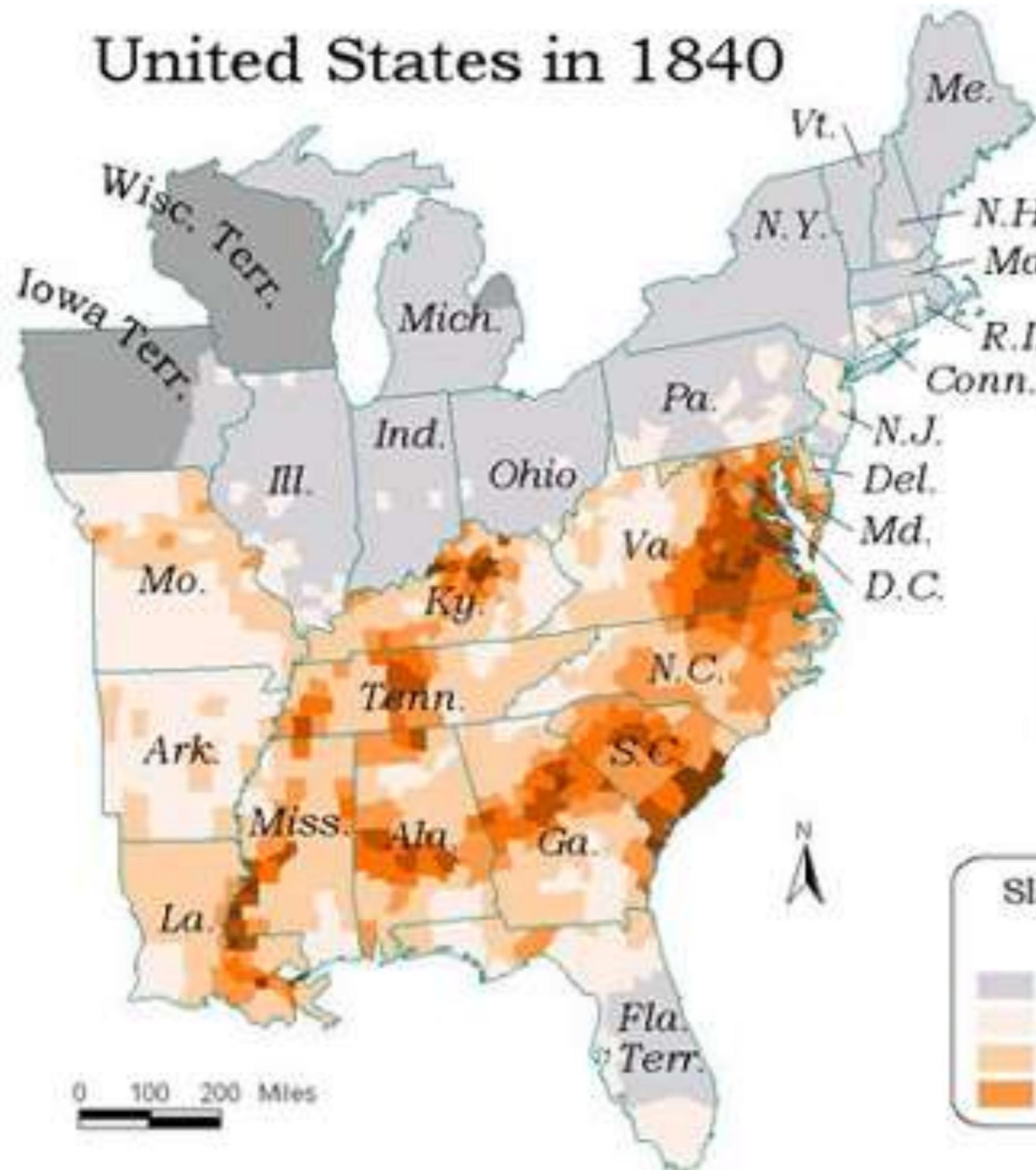


The “Peculiar Institution” of Slavery in America

United States in 1840

Slave Population Density (by county)



1840
Total U.S. Population
(Including Territories)
Bureau of the Census

Free Blacks	386,303
Slaves	2,487,455
Whites	14,195,695
Total	17,069,453

Slave Population Density (per square mile)

0	10 - 14
>0 - 1	15 - 19
2 - 4	20 and up
5 - 9	No data

0 100 200 Miles

“Black Belt” States



The cotton kingdom, 1850, and the limit of the cotton belt.

Myth of the “Happy Slave”



Defending Slavery

-“Proslaveryites” claimed slavery was supported by the authority of the Bible and the wisdom of Aristotle; that blacks were “lifted from the barbarism of the jungle and clothed with the blessings of Christian civilization” (Christian defense) →

“When a slave-owner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished. But if the slave survives a day or two, there is no punishment, for the slave is the owner’s property.”

-Exodus 21:20-21

:Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you...and they will become your property. You can will them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life.”

-Leviticus 25:44-46

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.”

-Ephesians 6:5

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything. Don’t do it just to please them when they are watching you. Obey them with an honest heart. Do it out of respect for the Lord.”

-Colossians 3:22

Defending Slavery

-White apologists also pointed out that master slave relationships really resembled those of a family (Paternalistic Defense)

-Some argued slaves did not have to worry about slack times or unemployment, as did the “hired hands” of the North; that slaves were cared for in sickness and old age, unlike Northern workers, who were abandoned when they no longer were useful



Economic Defense of Slavery

-Argued that the sudden end to the slave economy would have had a profound and killing economic impact in the South where reliance on slave labor was the foundation of their economy (cotton, tobacco, rice)

-If all slaves were freed, there would be widespread unemployment and chaos



“Mudsill” Theory

-Class of landless poor was inherently transient and easily manipulated → destabilized society as a whole

-The metaphor of the lowest threshold (mudsill) supports the foundation for a building → so the willingness of non-whites to perform menial work enabled the higher classes to move civilization forward

-Slavery protected the common good of slaves, masters, and society as a whole because it kept them from falling to “mobocracy”



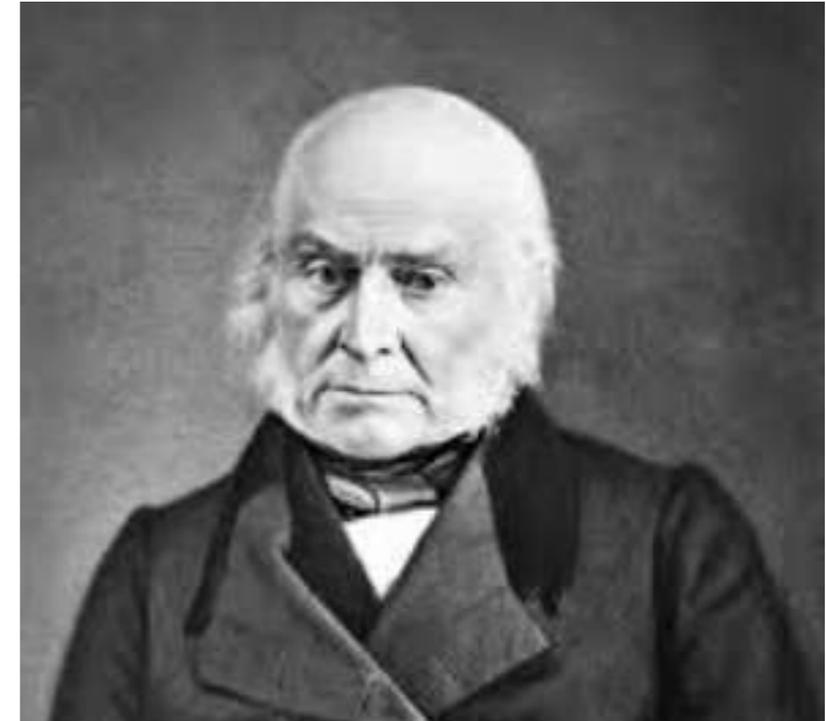
James Hammond (SC)

Slavery in Politics

-Amidst pro-slavery and anti-slavery arguments in Congress, much of their time was spent debating the institution

-The **Gag Resolution** was pushed in 1836 by Southern House members; required all anti-slavery appeals to be tabled without debate (fought over for 8 years before being repealed)

-Southern states in turn got Washington's blessing to order Southern postmasters to destroy abolitionist material they found circulating through the mail



"We can tell the impertinent scoundrels of *The Tribune* that they may exhaust an ocean of ink, their Emigrant Aid Societies spend their millions and billions, their representatives in Congress spout their heretical theories till doomsday, and his Excellency appoint abolitionist after free-soiler as our Governor, yet we will continue to lynch and hang, tar and feather and drown, every white-livered abolitionist who dares to pollute our soil."

ATTENTION
SOUTHERN MEN!
DOWN WITH
THE ABOLITION PRESS
MEET AT
SCHNEIDER'S
At 8 o'clock This Night.

Daily Life as an American Slave

- The owner usually supervised labor
- An overseer was hired if the owner had large plantations or did not live on site
- Slave drivers supervised the work of a group of slaves
- Work began at sunrise and ended at sunset
- Work days were extended during harvest time
- Women often worked at spinning yarn and making clothes at night
- Sunday was a day of rest and on many plantations; work ended at noon on Saturday
- Christmas was the major holiday of the year and lasted for days



Enforcement/Submission

Owners enforced discipline and work rules in many different ways:

- Slaves could be whipped, however, the use of the lash had limited value because it injured the slave, who often could not work until they recovered

- The threat of punishment made slaves work - but not always more efficiently

- Slave owners began to offer incentives for more efficient and better work (extra clothing, food, time off from work, etc.)



Rations and Conditions

Slaves usually ate meals together

Pork and corn were the most important parts of their diet; fruits, vegetables, game and fish supplemented their diet

-Food was adequate but not very nutritious

-Slave owners provided medical care but doctors were only called in for serious cases

-Housing quality varied; a new plantation had the most basic housing while established ones were better and usually brick



The Slave Community

- Slaves were considered property
- Families could be broken up at any time
- Slaves needed written permission to leave the property
- They were barred from reading and writing
- Any gathering of slaves had to have a white observer present
- Slaves could not testify in court

Effect: a sense of community was established where the group looked after each other and was like an extended family



Religion

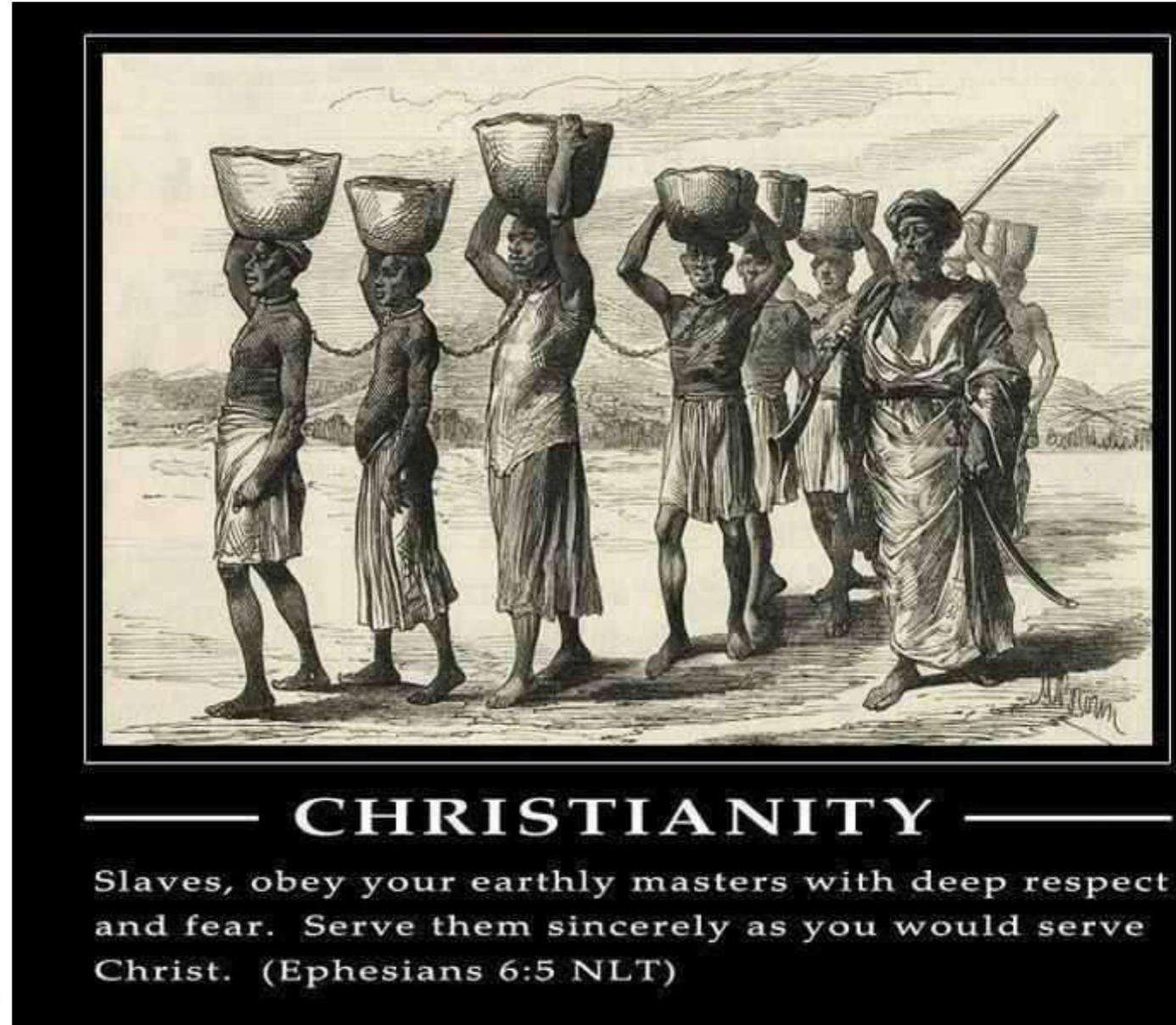
-Slaves learned to read and write despite slave codes

-They adopted and adapted Christianity to their birthplace's religious practices

-Slave owners used religion to control the slaves

-Slaves saw religion as a comfort and path to freedom in this life or the next; many spirituals compared their enslavement to biblical slavery

-Began building their own churches, preferring their own religious meetings so they could have a sense of culture and express emotions more freely than in any other setting



CHRISTIANITY

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. (Ephesians 6:5 NLT)

Resistance

-**Passive resistance:** slow downs, feigning illness, breaking equipment, running away

-**Active resistance:** using force against overseers/owners, damaging crops

Notable Rebellions: Gabriel Prosser's Rebellion (VA, 1800), Denmark Vessey's Rebellion (SC, 1822)

-The **Nat Turner Rebellion** of 1831 was a particularly violent revolt:

Nat Turner, a preacher, led a rebellion in Virginia that caused the deaths of at least 60 whites and 100 blacks

This sent shockwaves across the South and caused a crackdown on slave codes

