

A CONDENSED LOOK AT THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE CIVIL WAR

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When I began to study the Civil War, I realized that much of what I had been taught about it in school was either wrong or incomplete. It has been said that history is written by the victors. This is especially true when it comes to the Civil War. The Southern side of the story is rarely presented fairly in our public schools and textbooks today. I believe it is important that we as Americans know the whole truth about the Civil War. The purpose of this article is to present the South's side of the story.

The following basic facts are undisputed: The seven states of the Deep South seceded in response to the victory of the Republican Party's presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln, in the 1860 election. These states formed the Confederate States of America. Lincoln refused to recognize the Confederacy. A small federal garrison occupied Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on December 26, 1860. The Confederate government attempted to negotiate the withdrawal of the garrison from the fort. Lincoln decided not to evacuate the garrison. Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. Lincoln issued a call-up for 75,000 troops to put down what he claimed was a rebellion in the South. Four more Southern states joined the Confederacy. Lincoln sent federal armies into the South. The war lasted approximately four years and ended in April 1865.

The version of the Civil War that's taught in nearly all textbooks goes something like this: "The only reason the South wanted to leave the Union was to protect slavery. The South had no right to secede. The South started the war by firing on Fort Sumter. The war was fought over slavery. The defeat of the South was a victory for government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people.'" This is the version of the war that I accepted for most of my life.

We will consider twelve issues relating to the Civil War: Why Did the South Secede? Did the South Have the Right to Secede? What Caused the War? Who Started the War? The Emancipation Proclamation. Republicans, the North, and Racism. Was the War Fought Over Slavery? What Happened at Andersonville Prison? Did the South Control the Federal Government Until 1860? The Reconstruction Era. The True Nature of the War. And, What If the South Had Been Allowed to Go in Peace?

Why Did the South Secede?

Nearly all textbooks give the impression that the South withdrew from the Union merely to protect the institution of slavery. This is a misleading, overly simplistic characterization. Slavery was not the only factor that led the South to secede. In fact, some of the wealthiest slaveholders *opposed* secession. They believed, for good reason, that slavery would actually be safer in the Union than out of it. Historian William Klingaman notes that even Lincoln argued that the South would have a harder time protecting slavery outside the Union:

But secession, Lincoln argued, would actually make it harder for the South to preserve slavery. If the Southern states tried to leave the Union, they would lose all their constitutional guarantees. . . . (*Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, New York: Viking Press, 2001, p. 32)

Most people aren't aware that, even as president, Lincoln supported a proposed constitutional amendment that would have guaranteed slavery's continuation *forever*. Lincoln mentioned his support for this amendment in his first inaugural address. In the years leading up to the Civil War, Lincoln acknowledged that slavery was protected by the Constitution. He also supported the Fugitive Slave Law. Therefore, some Southern statesmen didn't believe Lincoln was going to threaten slavery's existence. Yet, they supported secession anyway.

Most Southern leaders who advocated secession in order to protect slavery did so because they believed that Lincoln and the Republicans in Congress would try to abolish slavery by unconstitutional means and that Southern slaveholders would not receive compensation for their slaves. Southern spokesmen felt this would be unfair, since Northern slaveholders had been able to receive various types of compensation for their slaves when most Northern states had abolished slavery several decades earlier. They knew that emancipation without compensation would do great damage to the Southern economy. Critics note that many Southern statesmen voiced the view that slavery was a "positive good." Yet, even the "positive good" advocates acknowledged that slavery had its evils and abuses. In any case, there were plenty of Southerners who opposed slavery and who were willing to see it abolished in a fair, gradual manner, as had been done in most Northern states. After all, 69-75 percent of Southern families did *not* own slaves. However, few Southerners believed the Republicans were interested in a fair, gradual emancipation program. The more extreme Republicans, who were known as "Radical Republicans," certainly weren't interested in such a program.

Few people today understand why the South distrusted the Republican Party. Not only was the Republican Party a new party, it was also the first purely regional (or sectional) party in the country's history. Republican leaders frequently gave inflammatory anti-Southern speeches, some of which included egregious falsehoods and even threats (Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era*, University of Kansas Press, 2000). Historian William C. Cooper points out that the Republicans "had no interest in cultivating support in the South, which they branded as basically un-American," and that "No major party had ever before so completely repudiated the South" (*Jefferson Davis, American*, Vintage Books Edition, New York: Vintage Books, 2000, pp. 294, 295). British historian Susan-Mary Grant notes that the Republican Party that came into being in 1854 was "a sectional party with a sectional ideology . . . that was predicated on opposition to the South, to the economic, social, and political reality of that section" (*North Over South*, p. 17). Southerners were alarmed when dozens of Republican congressmen endorsed an advertisement for Hinton Helper's book *The Impending Crisis of the South*, which spoke approvingly of a potential slave revolt that would kill untold numbers of Southern citizens in a "barbarous massacre." The Republican Party even distributed an abridged edition of the book as a campaign document, and Republican editors added captions like "The Stupid Masses of the South" and "Revolution . . . Violently If We Must." Southerners also noticed that the Republicans broke the long-established tradition of having a sectionally balanced presidential ticket. For decades, all major political parties had nominated tickets that consisted of one candidate from the North and one from the South. Each of the three other parties in the 1860 election followed this tradition, but not the Republican Party. Another reason that Southerners were worried about the Republicans was that the party's leaders made it clear they would push for several policies that the South believed were harmful and unconstitutional. Many Southerners feared that Republican leaders were determined to subjugate and exploit the South by any means. With these facts in mind, perhaps it's not hard to understand why the election of Lincoln triggered the secession of seven Southern states.

As mentioned, slavery was not the only factor that led to secession. If one reads the Declarations of Causes of Secession and the Ordinances of Secession that were issued by the first seven states

of the Confederacy, one finds that there were several reasons these states wanted to be independent and that some of the reasons had nothing to do with slavery. For example, the Georgia and Texas Declarations of Causes of Secession included economic complaints, in addition to concerns relating to slavery. The Texas declaration complained that unfair federal legislation was enriching the North at the expense of the Southern states. The Georgia declaration complained about federal protectionism and subsidies for Northern business interests.

The South's long-standing opposition to the federal tariff was another factor that led to secession. The South's concern over the tariff was nothing new. South Carolina and the federal government nearly went to war over the tariff in 1832-1833. In the session of Congress before Lincoln's inauguration, the House of Representatives passed a huge increase in the tariff, over the loud objections of Southern congressmen. Naturally, this alarmed Southern statesmen at all levels, since the South was always hit hardest by the tariff. One only has to read the many speeches that Southern senators and representatives gave against the 1860-1861 tariff increase to see how seriously they took this issue. Moreover, in the congressional debates from the previous four decades, one can find dozens of Southern speeches against the tariff. Opposition to the tariff led some Southern leaders to talk of secession over thirty years before the Civil War occurred (Walter Brian Cisco, *Taking A Stand: Portraits from the Southern Secession Movement*, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: White Mane Books, 2000, pp. 1-44). Scholars who argue that Southern statesmen didn't really care about the tariff and that this was merely a "smoke screen" are ignoring a massive body of historical evidence.

The South had valid complaints about the tariff. Jeffrey R. Hummel, a professor of economics and history, notes the negative impact of the tariff on the Southern states and concedes that Southern complaints about the tariff were justified:

Despite a steady decline in import duties, tariffs fell disproportionately on Southerners, reducing their income from cotton production by at least 10 percent just before the Civil War. . . .

At least with respect to the tariff's adverse impact, Southerners were not only absolutely correct but displayed a sophisticated understanding of economics. . . . The tariff was inefficient; it not only redistributed wealth from farmers and planters to manufacturers and laborers but overall made the country poorer. (*Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War*, Chicago: Open Court, 1996, pp. 39-40, 73)

A major point of contention between the North and the South was the issue of the size and power of the federal government as defined by the Constitution. Most Northern politicians supported a loose reading of the Constitution and wanted to expand the size and scope of the federal government, even if that meant giving the government powers that were not authorized by the Constitution. Most Southern statesmen supported a strict reading of the Constitution and believed the federal government should perform only those functions that were expressly delegated to it by the Constitution. From the earliest days of the republic, Southern and Northern leaders battled over this issue. Our textbooks rarely do justice to this important fact.

Four of the eleven Southern states did not join in the first wave of secession and did not secede over slavery. Those four states—Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia—only seceded months later when Lincoln made it clear he was going to launch an invasion in order to "save" the Union. In fact, those states initially voted *against* secession by fairly sizable majorities. However, they believed the Union should not be maintained by force. Therefore, when Lincoln announced he was calling up 75,000 troops to form an invasion force, they held new votes, and in

each case the vote was strongly in favor of secession. Thus, four of the eleven states that comprised the Confederacy seceded because of their objection to federal coercion and not because of slavery.

Virtually no history textbooks mention the fact that each Confederate state retained the right to abolish slavery within its borders, and that the Confederate Constitution permitted the admission of free states into the Confederacy. In his analysis of the Confederate Constitution, historian Forrest McDonald says the following:

All states reserved the right to abolish slavery in their domains, and new states could be admitted without slavery if two-thirds of the existing states agreed—the idea being that the tier of free states bordering the Ohio River might in time wish to join the Confederacy. (*States' Rights and the Union*, University of Kansas Press, 2000, p. 204)

Did the South Have the Right to Secede?

I believe the evidence is clear that the South had the right to secede. None other than Ulysses S. Grant, the commanding general of the Union army for much of the Civil War and later a president of the United States, admitted he believed that if any of the original thirteen states had wanted to secede in the early days of the Union, it was unlikely the other states would have challenged that state's right to do so. Grant also conceded he believed the founding fathers would have sanctioned the right of secession rather than see a war "between brothers." Said Grant,

If there had been a desire on the part of any single State to withdraw from the compact at any time while the number of States was limited to the original thirteen, I do not suppose there would have been any to contest the right, no matter how much the determination might have been regretted. . . .

If they [the founding fathers] had foreseen it, the probabilities are they would have sanctioned the right of a State or States to withdraw rather than that there should be war between brothers. (*The Personal Memoirs Of Ulysses S. Grant*, Old Saybrook, Connecticut: Konecky & Konecky, 1992, reprint of original edition, pp. 130-131)

There is nothing in the Constitution that prohibits a state from peacefully and democratically separating from the Union. Indeed, the right of secession is implied in the Tenth Amendment, which reads,

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

The Constitution does not give the federal government the power to force a state to remain in the Union against its will. President James Buchanan acknowledged this fact in a message to Congress shortly before Lincoln assumed office. Nor does the Constitution prohibit the citizens of a state from voting to repeal their state's ratification of the Constitution. Therefore, by a plain reading of the Tenth Amendment, a state has the legal right to peacefully withdraw from the Union.

Critics of the Confederacy cite certain clauses in the Constitution about the supremacy of federal law or about states not being allowed to enter into treaties with foreign powers, etc., etc. However, it goes without saying that such clauses only apply to states that are in the Union. There's simply nothing in the Constitution that says a state can't peacefully and democratically revoke its ratification. If a state's citizens were to vote in a legitimate democratic process to revoke the state's

ratification of the Constitution, either by direct vote or by convention, then that state would no longer be bound by the Constitution. The citizens of each state are the ultimate sovereign, not the federal government. The federal government is supposed to be servant of the people, not their master. Even Lloyd Paul Stryker, who opposed secession, admitted the Southern states had an “arguable claim that no specific section of the Constitution stood in their way,” i.e., no section of the Constitution prohibited peaceful, democratic separation (*Andrew Johnson: A Study in Courage*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930, p. 447).

The great early American constitutional scholar William Rawle said a state had the right to secede. Rawle was a contemporary of founding fathers Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and was appointed by George Washington as the first U.S. Attorney for Pennsylvania. Rawle’s book *A View of the Constitution of the United States* was used as a legal textbook at a number of universities, including West Point, Dartmouth, and Harvard. To this day, scholars who debate legal issues relating to the First and Second Amendments refer to Rawle’s work. On the issue of secession, Rawle said,

It depends on the state itself to retain or abolish the principle of representation, because it depends on itself whether it will continue a member of the Union. To deny this right would be inconsistent with the principle on which all our political systems are founded, which is, that the people have in all cases, a right to determine how they will be governed.

This right must be considered as an ingredient in the original composition of the general government, which, though not expressed, was mutually understood. . . . (*A View of the Constitution of the United States*, 2nd Edition, 1829, Vol. 4, p. 571)

Another early American legal giant, George Tucker, also said a state had the right to secede. Like Rawle, Tucker was a contemporary of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and corresponded with the former. Tucker came to be known as the “American Blackstone.” Tucker was a professor of law at the University of William and Mary. He served as the chief justice of the Virginia supreme court and was appointed as a federal district court judge by James Madison. Tucker’s 1803 edition of *Blackstone’s Commentaries*, which he annotated to American law, was widely used for the teaching of law in the United States for years. On the issue of secession, Tucker wrote that the states’ participation in the Union was voluntary and that each state had the right to resume to “the most unlimited extent” the functions that it had delegated to the federal government:

The federal government, then, appears to be the organ through which the united republics communicate with foreign nations and with each other. Their submission to its operation is voluntary: its councils, its engagements, its authority are theirs, modified, and united. Its sovereignty is an emanation from theirs, not a flame by which they have been consumed, nor a vortex in which they are swallowed up. Each is still a perfect state, still sovereign, still independent, and still capable, should the situation require, to resume the exercise of its functions as such in the most unlimited extent. (Tucker, editor, *Blackstone’s Commentaries: With Notes of Reference to the Constitution and Laws of the Federal Government of the United States*, Volume 1, Philadelphia: William Birch and Abraham Small, 1803, Appendix: Note D, Section 3:IV)

The Union was never meant to be held together by force. The Southern states joined the Union voluntarily, and they should have been able to leave it voluntarily. A key principle of Americanism is the sacred right of self-government, that government should only govern “with the consent of the governed.” This noble idea is expressed in the Declaration of Independence. America came into

existence by secession from England. There was only a war because England wouldn't allow the American colonies to leave in peace. George Washington's secretary of state, Timothy Pickering of Massachusetts, rightly said that America was founded on the principle of secession. Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and the third president of the United States, said in a letter to William Crawford in 1816 that if a state wanted to leave the Union, he would not hesitate to say "Let us separate," even if he didn't agree with the reasons the state wanted to leave.

The principle of peaceful separation was as American as apple pie. But Lincoln, relying on an utterly erroneous understanding of the founding of the Union, declared that secession was "treason," "insurrection," and "rebellion." If Lincoln had been alive during the Revolutionary War and had used the same kind of reasoning that he used against Southern secession, he would have sided with the British.

The South had no desire to overthrow the federal government. The South seceded in a peaceful, democratic manner, with the support of the overwhelming majority of Southern citizens. The Southern states used the same process to secede that the original thirteen states used to ratify the U.S. Constitution, i.e., by voting in special conventions comprised of delegates who were elected by the people. The one exception was Tennessee, which, instead of holding a convention, passed a secession resolution in the state legislature and then held a referendum in which secession won by a margin of more than two to one. Furthermore, most Southerners believed secession would be peaceful. In fact, it's revealing that the early correspondence of the first Confederate secretary of war, Leroy Walker, "clearly indicates he did not expect war" (Rembert Patrick, *Jefferson Davis and His Cabinet*, Louisiana State University Press, 1944, p. 106).

What Caused the War?

The war was fought because Lincoln refused to allow the South to go in peace. Other Republican leaders and certain Northern business interests played key roles in the decision to use force, but ultimately Lincoln was the one who had to make the decision, and he chose to launch an invasion. The fighting and dying started when federal armies invaded the South. That's why nearly all the battles were fought in the Southern states.

The Confederacy did not want war. One of the first things Jefferson Davis did after assuming office as president of the Confederacy was to send a peace delegation to Washington, D.C., in an effort to establish friendly ties with the federal government (Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American*, pp. 360-362; Kenneth Davis, *Don't Know Much About the Civil War*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996, pp. 156-157). The Confederacy offered to pay the South's share of the national debt and to pay compensation for all federal installations in the Southern states (Charles Roland, *The Confederacy*, University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 28; Patrick, *Jefferson Davis and His Cabinet*, p. 77; William C. Davis, *Look Away! A History of the Confederate States of America*, New York: The Free Press, 2002, p. 87). The Confederacy also announced that Northern ships would continue to enjoy free navigation of the Mississippi River (Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*, p. 138; Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, Volume 1, pp. 210-213). Yet, Lincoln rejected all Confederate peace offers and insisted that federal armies would invade if the Southern states didn't renounce their independence and recognize federal authority.

It should be pointed out that many Northern citizens opposed the war and believed the South should be allowed to leave in peace. Dozens of Northern newspapers expressed the view that the Southern states had the right to peacefully leave the Union and that it would be wrong to use force to compel them to stay. Even President James Buchanan told Congress in an official message

shortly before Lincoln assumed office that the federal government had no right to use force against the seceded states.

Who Started the War?

The standard textbook answer to this question is that the South obviously started the war because it “fired the first shot” by attacking Fort Sumter, which was located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Most textbooks don’t mention several facts that put the attack in proper perspective. For example, after the Fort Sumter incident, the Confederacy continued to express its desire for peaceful relations with the North. Not a single federal soldier was killed in the attack. The Confederates allowed the federal troops at the fort to return to the North in peace after they surrendered. South Carolina and then the Confederacy offered to pay compensation for the fort. Lincoln later admitted he deliberately provoked the attack so he could use it as justification for an invasion. The Confederates only attacked the fort after they learned that Lincoln had sent an armed naval convoy to resupply the federal garrison at the fort. The sending of the convoy violated the repeated promises of Lincoln’s secretary of state, William Seward, that the fort would be evacuated. Seward continued to promise the Confederacy that the fort would be evacuated even after he knew that Lincoln had decided to send the convoy. Major John Anderson, the Union officer who commanded the federal garrison at the fort, opposed the sending of the convoy, because he felt it would violate the assurances that the fort would be evacuated, because he knew it would be viewed as a hostile act, and because he did not want war. Several weeks before the Fort Sumter incident, Lincoln virtually declared war on the South in his inaugural address, even though he knew the Confederacy wanted peaceful relations.

In his inaugural speech, given weeks before the attack on Fort Sumter, Lincoln threatened to invade the seceded states if they didn’t continue to pay federal “duties and imposts” (the tariff) and/or if they didn’t allow the federal government to occupy and maintain all federal installations within their borders. Imagine what the American colonists would have thought if the British had said to them, “We want peace. But, we’re going to invade you if you don’t keep paying our tariff and/or if you don’t allow us to occupy and maintain all British installations within your borders.” The colonists would have rightly regarded this as a virtual declaration of war. Of course, in effect, the British did say this to the colonies. This was the same position that Lincoln presented to the Confederate states weeks before the Fort Sumter attack. Furthermore, five months earlier, some Republicans in Congress publicly swore “by everything in the heavens above and the earth beneath” that they would convert the seceded states “into a wilderness” (James McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1988, p. 251).

If Lincoln had desired peace, he knew all he had to do was evacuate Fort Sumter, as his own secretary of state had been promising would be done for weeks. When the Confederate authorities were told the fort was going to be evacuated, Confederate forces stopped building up the defenses around the harbor and celebrated. Across the harbor, Major Anderson was grateful the fort would be evacuated and that therefore North and South would separate peacefully (Cisco, *Taking A Stand*, pp. 105-106).

But, sadly, Lincoln didn’t pursue peace with the Confederacy. For a while it seemed as though he was prepared to evacuate Fort Sumter, in spite of his earlier statements to the contrary. Initially all but two of his cabinet members urged evacuation, as did his general-in-chief, General Winfield Scott. However, Radical Republicans and influential Northern business interests applied intense pressure on Lincoln and on his cabinet not to evacuate the fort. Radicals in the Senate threatened impeachment if the fort were evacuated (Catton and Catton, *Two Roads to Sumter*, p. 277). Once the low Confederate tariff was announced, powerful Northern business interests came out strongly

opposed to peace with the Confederacy. As the pressure for aggression mounted, Lincoln decided to provoke an attack on the fort in order to use the attack as a pretext for invasion and to whip up a majority of the Northern public into a war frenzy against the South. Lincoln himself later admitted that he provoked the attack so he could use it as justification for waging war (Francis Butler Simkins, *A History of the South*, Third Edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963, pp. 213, 215-216; J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969, p. 174).

Some Northern leaders who wanted peace urged that Fort Sumter be evacuated. Among those leaders was General-in-Chief Winfield Scott and Senator Stephen Douglas, one of the most prominent Northern members of the U.S. Senate. Scott and Douglas both recognized that the continued federal occupation of Fort Sumter was a virtual declaration of war against the Confederacy. Any country on earth would strongly resent the unwanted occupation of an island in one of its major harbors.

Republicans protested loudly over the fact that several Southern states seized numerous federal installations before Lincoln assumed office and in a few cases before the state had voted to secede. Modern critics tend to make a mountain out of a molehill over this issue, as if those seizures alone justified a brutal invasion. Nearly all the seizures occurred after the state had already seceded, so in those cases the state arguably had every right to assume control of federal facilities within its borders. Most of the relatively few pre-secession seizures took place when there was no doubt the state was going to secede. In one case, local citizens seized a federal installation on their own initiative. When the governor learned of the seizure, he ordered the citizens to leave the facility. Not one of the seizures involved the loss of life. A number of the federal facilities that were seized were of little consequence and were manned only by small garrisons. Admittedly, the pre-secession seizures, though few in number, were unwise and arguably illegal. However, let's keep in mind that these seizures posed no threat to the federal government, that they were bloodless, and that the Confederacy offered to pay compensation for all federal installations in the South. The seizures certainly didn't provide any credible justification for a federal invasion, and they were hardly what one could call "aggression" in any meaningful sense of the word.

The Emancipation Proclamation

Everyone can agree that slavery needed to be abolished. However, the Emancipation Proclamation, signed on January 1, 1863, left over 400,000 slaves in bondage. Let's take a moment to consider the purpose, nature, and legality of the Emancipation Proclamation.

The proclamation was a war measure, as the document itself states. The Radical Republicans hoped the proclamation would produce a slave revolt in the South, even if this resulted in the deaths of thousands of women and children on plantations and farms. (Perhaps it's an indication of how most slaves were treated that no such revolt ever occurred, even though many plantations and farms were being run by women and children at the time, since most of the men were engaged in the war effort.)

The proclamation did not free a single slave in any of the four Union slave states nor in any of the regions of the South that were then under Union control. The proclamation excluded the slaves in those areas. The proclamation only applied to slaves in the Confederate states, where Lincoln had no authority to enforce it. Slavery continued in the Northern slave states and in the South for the rest of the war and wasn't abolished until the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified in late 1865. Historians John Blum and Bruce Catton commented on the limited nature of the proclamation:

The Emancipation Proclamation asserted freedom for slaves in those areas that were not under control of the federal government and left slavery untouched in areas where federal control was effective. It seemed a halting measure of dubious effect and shaky legality, and the Confederates denounced it as a call for a slave revolt. (In Blum and Catton, Edmund Morgan, Arthur Schlesinger, Kenneth Stampp, and C. Vann Woodward, editors, *The National Experience: A History of the United States*, Second Edition, New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1968, p. 360)

African-American scholar Lerone Bennett documents that Lincoln only issued the proclamation under intense pressure from the Radical Republicans, who were threatening to cut off funds to the army if emancipation wasn't made a war objective, and that Lincoln only began to seriously consider the Radicals' demands after Union forces suffered several defeats (Bennett, *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000, pp. 23-24, 415-420, 498-504; see also Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, pp. 139, 148-149, 200-202). Bennett also shows that Lincoln sought to undermine the proclamation almost as soon as he issued it.

The proclamation provided no compensation for slaveholders, even though Lincoln himself had said this should be done, and even though most slaveholders treated their slaves humanely (as even many abolitionists had once been willing to admit). Few Northern abolitionists had ever supported compensated emancipation. The Radical Republicans certainly weren't about to support such a plan. They didn't care that several Northern states had reaped fantastic profits from the slave trade. Nor did they care that when most Northern states had abolished slavery they had done so gradually and in a manner that enabled Northern slaveholders to recover the cost of their slaves.

If the Southern states were still actually in the Union, as Lincoln and other Republicans incredibly claimed, then the Emancipation Proclamation was unconstitutional. Neither Lincoln nor Congress had the right to abolish slavery in any state. The only legal ways to abolish it would have been by a constitutional amendment or by the states abolishing it on their own.

Of course, the Southern states had in fact left the Union, and everyone knew it. Lincoln only denied this fact because he knew the federal government had no constitutional right to invade states that had peacefully and democratically separated from the Union. Since the Southern states were no longer part of the federal compact, the Emancipation Proclamation amounted to an attempt to incite a slave revolt in another country, in spite of the proclamation's disclaimer to the contrary. Certainly the Radicals hoped the proclamation would spark a slave revolt, regardless of the cost in human lives. American leaders reacted angrily when the British tried to incite a slave revolt in the American colonies during the Revolutionary War. This was a serious threat, since slaves were held in each of the thirteen colonies at the time. The British offered freedom to American slaves who would fight in the British army, and they encouraged slaves to sabotage the colonial war effort. Not surprisingly, tens of thousands of slaves flocked to British army encampments. Fortunately, however, not enough slaves fought for the British to turn the tide against the colonies. At the end of the war, at least 18,000 former slaves accompanied British troops as they evacuated New York, Charleston, Savannah, and other cities (Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*, p. 10).

If the Emancipation Proclamation had covered all slaves, if it had included compensation for slaveholders, and if it had contained guarantees against a slave revolt, it would have been on solid moral ground. It still would have been unconstitutional, but it would have been consistent, fair, and moral. However, the proclamation contained none of these things. It was intended as a war

measure. It left Northern slaves in bondage. Its real purpose was to advance the effort to subjugate the South, even if that meant causing the deaths of thousands of women and children. The Radicals and other Republicans were using Southern slaves as pawns in their effort to conquer the South.

Republicans, the North, and Racism

(NOTE: In this section it will be necessary to quote some offensive words and statements from the Civil War era. I apologize to those readers who are offended by them.)

The same Republican-controlled Congress that eventually made forceful emancipation a secondary goal of the war and that imposed oppressive Reconstruction rule on the South after the war, also sanctioned the federal government's terrible mistreatment of the American Indians. Historian C. Vann Woodward put it this way:

The same Congress that devised Radical Reconstruction . . . approved strict segregation and inequality for the Indian of the West. (In Blum and Catton et al, editors, *The National Experience*, p. 416)

With the Republicans firmly in control of the federal government, the Union army began a series of brutal campaigns against the American Indians a few months after the Confederate commanding general, Robert E. Lee, surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia. Federal forces and Northern militias cheated and abused the Indians on certain occasions during the war, but the federal campaigns against the Indians that started with the Sioux War in 1865 were vicious and remain a stain on our history. Under Republican rule, the federal government ordered forced relocations, engaged in shameful treaty violations, and authorized merciless attacks in which thousands of Indians, including many women and children, were killed. Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Phil Sheridan, fresh from having ravaged the South, were responsible for many of those attacks. The general who ordered the first post-war campaign against the Indians was Ulysses S. Grant. Much of the worst mistreatment of the Indians occurred when Grant was president (1868-1876). Republicans occupied the White House for all but seven of the thirty-one years from 1861 to 1892 (three of those seven years were under Lincoln's vice president, Andrew Johnson, and the remaining four years didn't come until 1884-1888). The Republicans controlled Congress for the majority of that period as well, especially from 1861 to 1874.

I agree with Thomas DiLorenzo's point that the Republicans' treatment of the Indians raises questions about their professed concern for social justice:

The fact that the war against the Plains Indians began just three months after Lee's surrender calls into question yet again the notion that racial injustices in the South were the primary motivation for Northerners' willingness to wage such a long and destructive war. No political party purporting to be sensitive to racial injustice could possibly have even contemplated doing to the Indians what the United States government did to them.

Both the Southern Confederates and the Indians stood in the way of the Whig/Republican dream of a North American economic empire, complete with a subsidized transcontinental railroad, a nationalized banking system, and protectionist tariffs. Consequently, both groups were conquered and subjugated by the most violent means. (*The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War*, Paperback Edition, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003, pp. 222-223)

Another example of Republican hypocrisy was the Republican Party's platform for the 1868 presidential election. Ulysses S. Grant ran for president on this platform, and won handily. The platform stated that the Southern states should be forced to allow blacks to vote but that the Northern states should be allowed to decide this issue for themselves. The Republicans took this position even though every Northern state that had voted on amendments for black voting rights in the preceding three years had soundly defeated those amendments. Republican leaders knew that racism was so widespread in the North that they would lose the election if they advocated forcing the Northern states to allow blacks to vote. Many Republicans themselves weren't enthusiastic about voting rights for Northern blacks anyway.

Many Republican leaders, including some of the Radicals, held racist views. Thaddeus Stevens, the leader of the Radicals in the House, not only opposed racial integration but believed blacks were less intelligent than whites and, in the words of friendly biographer Fawn Brodie, "insisted that he had never held to the doctrine of Negro equality" (Fawn Brodie, *Thaddeus Stevens: Scourge of the South*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1959, p. 193; Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*, p. 300). Incidentally, Stevens also believed the Constitution was "a worthless bit of old parchment" (Brodie, *Thaddeus Stevens*, p. 292). Another powerful Radical in the House, George Julian, lectured his fellow Republicans about their racism, saying, "The real trouble is that we hate the negro. It is not his ignorance that offends us, but his color. . . ." (Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, Vintage Books Edition, New York: Vintage Books, 1965, p. 102). Benjamin Wade, a leading Radical in the Senate, was overheard "railing about too many 'nigger' cooks in the capital" and complaining that he had eaten so many meals "cooked by Niggers" that he could "smell and taste the Nigger all over" (Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, p. 53). In the 1860 election campaign, numerous Republican leaders championed their party as the true "White Man's Party" that would keep the western territories safe for white labor (McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982, p. 123). Lincoln's secretary of state, William Seward, the man who claimed in 1858 that there was an "irrepressible conflict" between the free states and the slaveholding states, spoke for many Republicans when he said,

The North has nothing to do with the Negroes. I have no more concern for them than I have for the Hottentots. . . . They are not of our race. (In Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, p. 295)

Lincoln himself held racist views. As a politician in Illinois, Lincoln voted to deny blacks the right to vote, and he supported the state's oppressive "Black Code." Lincoln used the N-word, even in public statements, and even as president. Lincoln referred to the Declaration of Independence as "the white man's charter of freedom." He also said he did not support allowing blacks to be citizens, explaining, "I am not in favor of negro citizenship" (*The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, edited by Roy Basler, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1952-1955, p. 179). In an 1858 speech, Lincoln left no doubt about his views on race:

I will say, then, that I am not nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way, the social and political equality of the white and black races; that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters of the free negroes, or jurors, or qualifying them to hold office, or having them to marry white people. I will say in addition, that there is a physical difference between the white and black races, which, I suppose, will forever forbid the two races living together upon terms of social and political equality, and inasmuch as they cannot so live, that while they do remain together, there must be the position of superior and inferior, that I as much as any other man am in favor of the superior position being assigned to the white man. (*Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings 1832-1858*, New York: The Library of

To be fair, it should be noted that Lincoln was by no means alone in his views. The sad truth is that in those days the vast majority of white Americans, in all parts of the country, shared Lincoln's racial attitudes. Most whites believed that the white race was the superior race and that therefore blacks and other minorities belonged to inferior races. Nearly all textbooks give the false impression that white supremacy and racism were mainly confined to the South, but these problems were widespread in the North as well. Numerous historians have acknowledged this fact. In many cases, the "free" states weren't very free for blacks. Historian Robert Cruden:

To understand something of the nature of that problem we must look at the position of the American Negro in the 1860s. . . . Throughout the nation there were 488,000 free Negroes. . . . Most free Negroes—258,000—lived in the South. . . .

"Free people of color" were welcome in few places. In the North they were almost universally segregated, excluded from public life, and their children barred from white public schools. In those areas where separate Negro schools were provided they were inadequately financed and instruction was poor. . . .

The situation of the black American when the war ended was ambiguous. . . . Northerners as a whole, willing to concede freedom, were hostile to equality. Many of them dreaded an incursion of black folk after the war—especially among lower paid workers who feared Negro competition and some not so poorly paid who resented possible Negro entry into their crafts. The use of Negroes as strikebreakers during the war and their employment in areas where whites were out of work resulted in agitation and riots and intensified anti-Negro feeling.

Such sentiment, however, was by no means confined to workingmen. Between 1865 and 1867 voters in Connecticut, Wisconsin, and Ohio rejected proposals for Negro suffrage [the right to vote]; in 1868 only 8 out of 16 Northern states permitted Negroes to vote. Oregon even continued its pre-war prohibition against the entry of free Negroes. . . . (*The Negro in Reconstruction*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969, pp. 6, 12-13)

African-American scholars John Franklin and Alfred Moss:

There can be no doubt that many blacks were sorely mistreated in the North and West. Observers like Fanny Kemble and Frederick L. Olmsted mentioned incidents in their writings. Kemble said of Northern blacks, "They are not slaves indeed, but they are pariahs, debarred from every fellowship save with their own despised race. . . . All hands are extended to thrust them out, all fingers point at their dusky skin, all tongues . . . have learned to turn the very name of their race into an insult and a reproach." Olmsted seems to have believed the Louisiana black who told him that they could associate with whites more freely in the South than in the North and that he preferred to live in the South because he was less likely to be insulted there. (*From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000, p. 185)

Was the War Fought Over Slavery?

The war was fought over Southern independence, not over slavery. Lincoln said repeatedly the war was not being fought over slavery. In August 1862, over a year after the war started, Lincoln wrote an open letter to a prominent Republican abolitionist, Horace Greeley, in which he said he did

not agree with those who would only “save” the Union if they could destroy slavery at the same time. Lincoln added that if he could “save” the Union without freeing a single slave, he would do so (Letter to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862, published in the *New York Tribune*).

In July 1861, after the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) had been fought, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution, by an overwhelming majority, that declared the war was not being fought to disturb slavery, nor to subjugate the South, but only to “maintain the Union” (i.e., to force the Southern states back into the Union). A few months later, in September, a group of Radicals visited Lincoln to urge him to make compulsory emancipation a war objective. Lincoln declined, telling the Radicals, “We didn’t go into the war to put down slavery, but to put the flag back” (Brodie, *Thaddeus Stevens*, p. 155; Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, pp. 75-76). Later on, about halfway through the war, the Radicals and other Republicans succeeded in making the uncompensated abolition of Southern slavery a *secondary* goal of the war. However, the primary purpose of the federal invasion was always to destroy Southern independence.

The war itself really had nothing directly to do with slavery. It’s true that issues involving slavery were the most important factors behind the first wave of secession, but secession and the war were two separate events, and four of the Southern states did not secede over slavery. As noted earlier, secession was a peaceful, democratic process. The seceded states posed no threat to the federal government, and they had no intention of trying to overthrow the government. The Confederate states wanted to live in peace with the North and offered to pay their share of the national debt and to pay compensation for all federal forts in the South.

If the Southern states had not seceded, there would have been no war and slavery would have continued. If the Southern states had surrendered when Lincoln issued his call-up for an invasion force, there would have been no war and slavery would have continued. If Jefferson Davis’s first announcement as Confederate president had been that the Confederacy was going to abolish slavery, Lincoln and the Radicals still would have invaded the South. If the Confederacy had informed Lincoln at any point during the war that it was going to start an emancipation program, Lincoln would not have suddenly called off the federal invasion. The issue was Southern independence, not slavery.

The reaction of the Northern abolitionists to the proposal of fellow abolitionist Moncure Conway is further proof the war was not fought over slavery. At least a few of the abolitionists were Republicans, and nearly all of them strongly supported the Radicals. Conway, on the other hand, was a pacifist. Yet, at first Conway reluctantly supported the invasion of the South. “But,” notes Jeffrey Hummel, “the increasing bloodshed sickened him.” So, when Conway was in England in 1863, he proposed to a Confederate envoy that if the South freed the slaves the abolitionists would oppose the war. Conway also said he would support the continuation of the Confederacy as long as the Confederacy abolished slavery. Strangely enough, leading abolitionists had selected Conway to go to England in order to convince the British that the war was being fought to free the slaves. However, when Conway’s proposal for Southern independence coupled with abolition was published, most abolitionists reacted with outrage and withdrew their support from him (*Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*, p. 206).

To most Southerners, independence was more important than the continuation of slavery. This is not surprising, since less than 10 percent of Southern citizens actually held title to slaves, and since 69-75 percent of Southern families did not own slaves (John Niven, *The Coming of the Civil War: 1837-1861*, Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1990, p. 34; Divine et al, editors, *America Past and Present*, p. 389; see also the 1860 Census). Early in the war, James Alcorn, a powerful planter-politician from Mississippi, began to talk openly about emancipation. Duncan

Kenner, one of the most powerful slaveholders in the South and a chairman in the Confederate Congress, urged that slavery be abolished. Robert E. Lee, the Confederacy's most famous general, believed slavery was evil and favored gradual emancipation. The Confederate secretary of state, Judah Benjamin, and Governor William Smith of Virginia, also supported ending slavery. By late 1864, Jefferson Davis himself was prepared to abolish slavery in order to gain European diplomatic recognition and thus save the Confederacy, which shows that independence was more important to him than preserving slavery.

A Confederate soldier who was captured early in the war expressed the South's reason for fighting in simple yet eloquent terms. He wore a ragged homemade uniform, and like most other Southerners he didn't own any slaves. When his Union captors asked him why he was fighting for the Confederacy, he replied, "I'm fighting *because you're down here*" (McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 311, emphasis added).

What Happened at Andersonville Prison?

The question that really should be asked is, Why did thousands of Confederate prisoners die of starvation, disease, and exposure in Northern prison camps when the Union army could have easily given them adequate food, housing, and medical care?

Yes, thousands of Union prisoners died of starvation, disease, and exposure at the Confederate prison camp at Andersonville, but that was because the Confederacy simply didn't have enough food, medicine, and facilities to care for them. During this same period, tens of thousands of Confederate soldiers were going hungry on a regular basis and lacked adequate medical supplies--because of the Union naval blockade and because of the inhumane destruction that Union armies were inflicting on the South. Confederate authorities tried to obtain medical supplies for the Union prisoners at Andersonville, but Lincoln refused to sell them, even though the Confederates offered to allow Union doctors to accompany the supplies to ensure they were used for Union prisoners. After the war, even some Union officers placed the blame for Andersonville squarely on Lincoln and on Ulysses S. Grant, not on the Confederacy.

One of the most balanced and objective treatments of the issue of Andersonville can be found in J. G. Randall and David Donald's highly acclaimed book *The Civil War and Reconstruction*. No one would argue that Randall and Donald were pro-Confederate historians—in fact, they were decidedly pro-Union in their outlook. However, on most issues they were fair and objective, and one of those issues was the Confederate prison camp at Andersonville. Among other things, Randall and Donald said,

The Andersonville prison, until the soldiers built huts for themselves, was but a stockaded enclosure of sixteen and a half acres in southwestern Georgia. Mosquito-infested tents; myriads of maggots; pollution and filth due to lack of sanitation; soldiers dying by thousands; men desperately attempting to tunnel their way to freedom; prison mates turning on their fellows whom they suspected of treachery or theft; unbaked rations; inadequate hospital facilities; escaping men hunted down by bloodhounds—such are the details that come down to us from incontrovertible sources. The causes of such conditions are to be found in the sheer inability of officers in charge to cope with the immense number of prisoners pouring in on them before preparations could be made to receive them, the insurmountable difficulties in obtaining supplies and equipment, and the poverty of the Confederacy in material resources. Union prisoners at Andersonville were in no worse case than many of the soldiers of Lee's army; and it should be remembered that "the prisoners received the same rations as the soldiers who were guarding them" [quoting pro-Northern historian James F.

Much could be said about the thousands of Confederate prisoners who died in Union prison camps and about the horrible conditions in many of those camps. The Union had no excuse for not adequately caring for its Confederate prisoners. Unlike the Confederacy, which was literally starving and was being invaded and blockaded, the Union had more than enough food, medicine, and equipment. There was no reason that a single Confederate prisoner should have died of starvation or exposure. Even Kenneth Davis, who is very critical of the Confederacy on nearly all issues, admits that thousands of Confederate prisoners were deliberately mistreated by the Union army:

The worst Union prison was in Elmira, in upstate New York, where 2,963 Confederate soldiers died, nearly a quarter of the 12,123 men held there. This death rate was only slightly less than Andersonville's and more than double the average death rate in the other Union prison camps. Built in May 1864, after prisoner exchanges were halted, the camp was designed to hold 5,000 men. The deaths at Elmira were caused by diseases brought on by starvation and terrible living conditions. During a bitterly cold winter, clothes sent by families for the prisoners were deliberately withheld, and hundreds of men, forced to live in tents with no blankets, froze to death. In May 1864 War Secretary [Edwin] Stanton ordered prisoner rations reduced to the same amount issued to Confederate soldiers. This supposedly ensured that Confederate prisoners were receiving the equivalent of the rations Union prisoners were getting. In other words, in the midst of plenty in the Union, malnourished Confederate prisoners suffered epidemics of scurvy, diarrhea, pneumonia, and smallpox. (*Don't Know Much About the Civil War*, p. 354)

Did the South Control the Federal Government Until 1860?

The claim is frequently made that the South controlled the federal government until the 1860 election, and that therefore the South showed a lack of tolerance and fairness when it seceded in response to Lincoln's victory. However, anyone who is familiar with American history knows that the South did not control the federal government until 1860. Many Northern politicians and writers trumpeted this myth for political and propaganda purposes. A major component of this myth was that the alleged "Slave Power" in the South was behind the South's supposed domination of the federal government. Some Northern leaders even claimed there was a "Slave Power conspiracy" to impose slavery on the entire country. When the war ended, Radical Republicans issued dire warnings about the need to crush this supposed "Slave Power" in order to justify their subjugation and looting of the defeated South.

For one thing, wealthy Southern plantation owners, i.e., the men who allegedly comprised the supposed "Slave Power," did not dictate Southern politics. Moreover, they were by no means uniform in their political beliefs. In fact, many affluent planters were Whigs (Frank Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, LSU Press Edition, LSU Press, 1982, pp. 141-142; Arthur Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945, p. 453; McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 242). And, as mentioned earlier, some of the wealthiest slaveholders opposed secession. In Georgia, for example, many counties with heavy concentrations of Whig slaveholders voted against secession (McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 242). Randall and Donald pointed out that the plantation aristocracy did not control the South's political destinies:

Nor is it to be inferred that a plantation "aristocracy" somehow controlled the political destinies of the region, for the current of democracy had eroded the powers of the gentry until "whatever influence the planters exercised over the political action of the common

people was of a personal and local nature” [quoting Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, p. 139]. (*The Civil War and Reconstruction*, pp. 40-41)

If the South truly “controlled” the federal government until 1860, one can only wonder why the federal tariff was never as low as the South wanted it to be, why Congress gave the Northern states a legal monopoly in the lucrative shipbuilding business and why this monopoly was never repealed, why it took ten years for Texas to be admitted as a state, why Cuba was never annexed, how the Missouri Compromise became law in 1820, how the Tariff of Abominations passed Congress in 1828, how the Force Bill passed Congress in 1833, how the tariff act of 1842 passed Congress, how the John Calhoun resolutions of 1847-1848 were all defeated, how the Wilmot Proviso passed the House of Representatives twice, how the Compromise of 1850 was enacted, why Kansas wasn’t admitted as a slave state, why the Missouri Compromise line wasn’t extended to the west coast, and how the draconian Morrill Tariff passed the House in 1860. (Some critics claim that Southern congressmen supported the 1828 Tariff of Abominations, but in point of fact most Southern congressmen voted against it [Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States*, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1910, pp. 61-62].)

It’s true that there were periods when the South had more influence on federal policy than did the North, but there were also periods when this was not the case. At no time did the South “control” the federal government. Cooper notes that “after mid-1854 no chance remained for a congressional majority on any initiative marked as a southern measure” (*Jefferson Davis, American*, p. 284). The South was usually able to block or modify unwanted bills in the Senate, but not always, and the South was frequently unable to defeat unwanted bills in the House. As early as 1819 “the North had built up a decisive majority in the House of Representatives” (Divine et al, editors, *America Past and Present*, p. 281).

As for the presidency, Presidents John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, William Harrison, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan were all Northern politicians. And who were the Southern presidents? They were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, John Tyler, James K. Polk, and Zachary Taylor. So the South by no means enjoyed exclusive control of the White House prior to the war. Furthermore, the “Southern” presidents didn’t automatically take the South’s side on all issues, just as the “Northern” presidents didn’t automatically take the North’s side on all issues. For example, President Taylor sided with Northern politicians on crucial aspects of the Compromise of 1850 and also supported the Wilmot Proviso, even though he himself was a slaveholder.

When the South did exercise considerable influence on federal policy, it used that influence in efforts to reduce taxes, to limit the growth of the federal government, to curb or eliminate harmful protectionist trade policies, to impose fiscal responsibility on federal spending, to abolish the corrupt United States Bank, to preserve our free banking system, to prohibit the use of tax dollars for wasteful corporate welfare schemes, to expand the land area of the United States by acquiring new territory, to preserve the sovereignty of the states, and to enforce a strict interpretation of the Constitution. Under Southern leadership, Texas was finally admitted to the Union and the gigantic land area of the Mexican Cession became American territory. And if Southern leaders had been able to persuade the federal government to acquire Cuba, that beautiful island would have become an American state, there would have been no Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Cuban people wouldn’t be suffering under Fidel Castro’s oppressive Marxist regime (which has been in power for over forty years now).

I’m not saying that Southern politicians did no wrong. For example, the Southern-inspired 1836-1844 gag rule in the House of Representatives, which prevented debate on petitions to abolish

slavery in the District of Columbia, was unfortunate, though many Northern congressmen supported the rule as well. The largely Southern-backed Lecompton Constitution for Kansas was admittedly unfair, and fortunately the people of Kansas were eventually able to vote it down. But such cases were the exception, not the rule. Most of the time Southern politicians used their influence to pursue good, sound policies that benefited all citizens.

The Reconstruction Era

Time only allows me to provide a brief sketch of the “Reconstruction” program that the Republicans imposed on the South after the war. I don’t deny that some good things were accomplished during Reconstruction. Nor do I deny that Reconstruction, as bad as it was, could have been worse. However, most textbooks only talk about the good aspects of Reconstruction and either ignore or minimize the negative aspects. The unjust, illegal aspects of Reconstruction merit discussion.

Reconstruction began in 1865 and officially ended in 1877. The Radicals took substantial control of Reconstruction in 1867. Reconstruction was bad enough from the outset, but it became much worse under Radical influence. The Radicals illegally placed the South under military rule. They divided the South into five military districts, each governed by a Union army general. They nullified the recent Southern elections and refused to allow Southern congressmen to take their seats in Congress, even though these men had been elected in elections that were just as valid as any election that had been held in the North. Not content with their political subjugation of the South, the Radicals and other Republicans allowed the Southern states to be looted and exploited for years by Northern business interests and by corrupt Reconstruction governments. The Radicals did these things over the strenuous objections of Lincoln’s successor, President Andrew Johnson.

The Radicals also shamelessly contradicted the earlier Republican claim that the Southern states had not left the Union. During the war, Lincoln and other Republicans made the bizarre argument that the Southern states had not really left the Union but that they had been taken over by “combinations” too powerful for local authorities to suppress. According to this pathetic argument, Lincoln wasn’t invading the Southern states; rather, he was merely liberating them from the “combinations” that had supposedly seized control of them. Well, once the war was over, the Radicals decided that the Southern states had left the Union after all, and that they couldn’t be readmitted until they complied with Republican demands.

During the worst period of Reconstruction, Southerners who voiced objections to Republican policy could be jailed, and even executed, without indictment or trial. Southern newspapers that criticized Reconstruction ran the real risk of being shut down, and some newspapers were closed down for this reason. Federal troops were stationed all over the South, and in many cases their conduct was disgraceful and abusive. Many Republican operatives and other Northerners who came to the South poisoned race relations by inciting former slaves to hate and persecute Southern whites. The Republicans made it illegal for males who had served in the Confederate army or in the Confederate government to vote or hold public office. Ex-Confederates could only vote if they were willing to lie by taking the “ironclad oath.” The oath disqualified any man who had served in the Confederacy or who had even “aided” the Confederacy. Of course, this excluded a large majority of Southern men. To their credit, some Southern black leaders opposed denying former Confederates the right to vote, but their efforts were unsuccessful. New Southern legislatures and governors were chosen in elections in which most former Confederates were barred from voting. These corrupt Reconstruction state governments imposed oppressive taxes on their citizens and also stole or wasted a staggering amount of taxpayer money.

Hummel notes the heavy tax burden that was imposed on the South after the war:

. . . the war-ravaged South suffered under some of the heaviest state and local taxation in proportion to wealth in U.S. history. Tax rates in 1870 were three or four times what they had been in 1860, even though property values had declined significantly. Many who had not lost their land already were now forced into bankruptcy. At one point 15 percent of all taxable land in Mississippi was up for sale because of tax defaults. (*Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*, p. 316)

Northern business interests took full advantage of the South's subjugation during Reconstruction. African-American scholars Franklin and Moss note that "Northern financiers and industrialists took advantage of the opportunity to impose their economic control on the South, and much of it endured for generations" (*From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, p. 264). Kenneth Davis concedes that Southern railroad companies were "burdened for decades by unfair rates and restrictive tariffs set by Northerners, who controlled the vast majority of railways and the legislatures that set rates" (*Don't Know Much About the Civil War*, pp. 425-426).

"But," some will ask, "wasn't slavery abolished under Reconstruction?" Yes, slavery was abolished during the Johnson phase of Reconstruction when the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified on December 18, 1865. We can all agree that slavery was wrong and that it needed to be abolished. But it was abolished in a way that was unfair and that caused enormous damage to the Southern economy. Under the Thirteenth Amendment, Southern slaveholders received no compensation for their slaves. The abolition of slavery without compensation cost the South about two billion dollars in capital, and it reduced real estate values by at least that amount. In terms of modern monetary value, this represented a total loss of over sixty billion dollars.

Southern slaveholders should have been able to recover the cost of their slaves, just as Northern slaveholders had been able to do decades earlier. Most Southern slaveholders treated their slaves humanely. Many of these men believed they had a Christian duty to properly and respectfully care for their slaves. One doesn't have to condone human bondage to acknowledge that in most cases Southern slavery was administered humanely. This isn't the place for an extended discussion on slavery in the pre-war South, but it should be pointed out that Southern slaves had a life expectancy that was comparable to urban populations and *higher* than in Europe, that 66-80 percent of slave marriages were *not* broken up, that nearly 40 percent of the marriages performed in Southern Episcopal churches between 1800 and 1860 were slave marriages, that even in the 1850s many slaves were able to buy their freedom because they were permitted to earn money, and that hundreds of thousands of slaves were converted to Christianity. Granted, no matter how humanely slavery was administered, it was still wrong. The point is that most Southern slaveholders did not deserve to lose their slaves without compensation, and that this unfair policy did great damage to the South's economy.

Textbooks note the fact that Radical Reconstruction included civil rights reforms that enabled former slaves to vote. However, they almost never mention information that sheds important light on those reforms. If the Republicans had enacted and implemented these reforms in a legal, ethical manner, and if their motives for doing so had been noble, they would deserve nothing but praise. But such was not the case. Most Republican leaders supported the imposition of these reforms because they wanted to control and exploit the Southern states, not because they really cared about the fate of the ex-slaves. Republican operatives manipulated, and sometimes even coerced, ex-slaves to vote Republican so the Republican Party could take over Southern state governments. Once the Republicans achieved this goal, they proceeded to engage in large-scale corruption and oppression, which harmed blacks and whites alike. A respected moderate Southern leader in Mississippi warned President Johnson that the Republican-created Freedmen's Bureau was "demoralizing the negroes, robbing and defrauding them" (Felicity Allen, *Jefferson Davis*:

Civil rights could and should have been advanced through legal, ethical means. Yes, this would have taken longer, but it would have preserved the constitutional republic that our founding fathers gave us, and all Americans would have been better off in the long run. Instead, in the name of imposing civil rights on the South, the Republicans, led by the Radicals, subverted the rule of law, permitted Republican operatives to engage in astonishing corruption, looted the South for years, poisoned race relations, illegally and unethically amended the Constitution, further destroyed the balance of power between the states and the federal government, and empowered the federal government to perform functions that the founding fathers did not want it to perform.

I would like to conclude this discussion on Reconstruction by quoting a substantial portion of President Johnson's veto of the first Radical Reconstruction Act. Before doing so, I should point out that the Radicals tried to remove Johnson from office because he opposed their Reconstruction program, even though he had staunchly supported the war and had opposed secession. When Lincoln was assassinated, some Radicals said Lincoln's death was "a godsend to the country" because they believed Johnson, unlike Lincoln, would help them ravage the South. When the Radicals realized Johnson was not going to cooperate with them, they turned on him with a vengeance. They impeached (i.e., indicted) him in the House and then put him on trial in the Senate, on the basis of utterly frivolous charges (Johnson was acquitted). Amazingly, a few Radicals even tried to frame Johnson for Lincoln's murder. In any case, the Radicals overturned Johnson's veto. Therefore, their Reconstruction program became law and was imposed on ten of the eleven Southern states (the one exception was Tennessee). Here is some of what President Johnson had to say about the first Reconstruction Act and why he refused to sign it:

I have examined the bill "to provide for the more efficient government of the rebel States" with the care and the anxiety which its transcendent importance is calculated to awaken. I am unable to give it my assent for reasons so grave that I hope a statement of them may have some influence on the minds of the patriotic and enlightened men with whom the decision must ultimately rest. The bill places all the people of the ten States therein named under the absolute domination of military rulers. . . .

The bill . . . would seem to show upon its face that the establishment of peace and good order is not its real object. The fifth section declares that the preceding sections shall cease to operate in any State where certain events shall have happened. . . . All these conditions must be fulfilled before the people of any of these States can be relieved from the bondage of military domination; but when they are fulfilled, then immediately the pains and penalties of the bill are to cease, no matter whether there be peace and order or not, and without any reference to the security of life or property. The excuse given for the bill in the preamble is admitted by the bill itself not to be real. The military rule which it establishes is plainly to be used, not for any purpose of order or for the prevention of crime, but solely as a means of coercing the people into the adoption of principles and measures to which it is known that they are opposed, and upon which they have an undeniable right to exercise their own judgment. . . .

I submit to Congress whether this measure is not in its whole character, scope, and object without precedent and without authority, in palpable conflict with the plainest provisions of the Constitution, and utterly destructive to those great principles of liberty and humanity for which our ancestors on both sides of the Atlantic have shed so much blood and expended so much treasure. . . . (Veto of the first Reconstruction Act, March 2, 1867)

The True Nature of the War

In reality, the Civil War was not a civil war. In a civil war, two or more factions fight for control of the national government. But the South was not trying to overthrow the national government, nor was it trying to achieve exclusive control of the government. The South merely wanted to leave the federal government in peace and was willing to pay its share of the national debt and to pay compensation for federal installations in the Southern states. The Confederacy tried to establish peaceful relations with the federal government, but Lincoln refused to even meet with Confederate representatives.

The Civil War was a war of aggression against the South. Republican leaders and their Northern industrialist backers used the force of the federal government to destroy Southern independence. Some of these men despised the South. Radical Republicans saw in secession an excuse to subjugate and exploit the Southern states. Northern business leaders who bankrolled the Republicans feared that their financial empire would be threatened if the Confederate states were able to trade directly with other nations with the much lower Confederate tariff. The Republicans weren't about to lower the tariff, since they were committed to drastically raising it (which they did soon after the South seceded). Rather than fairly compete with the low Confederate tariff by lowering the federal tariff, the Republicans and their Northern financial backers opted to destroy the Confederacy by force. Charles Adams demonstrates that after the Confederacy announced its low tariff, influential Northern business interests began to strongly oppose peaceful separation and Lincoln's cabinet quickly reversed itself and adopted a hardline stance on Fort Sumter (*When In the Course of Human Events: Arguing the Case for Southern Secession*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, pp. 26-27, pp. 61-70). Simkins said the following about the motives behind the federal invasion, race relations in the North, and what happened when Southern influence was removed from the federal government:

Northern industrial and financial leaders wished to destroy the influence of the agrarian South in Washington in order to use the powers of the federal government to their own advantage. Northern common people wished slavery restricted or abolished because they objected to the competition of cheap labor, not because they wished to make the bondsmen their equals. Both of these groups revealed their intentions when Southern influence was removed from the federal capital and when the Negro was free. The business leaders imposed high tariffs, constitutional protection to corporations, monetary deflation, and centralized banking. The common people denied the free Negro access to Western lands [the western territories] and imposed upon him caste restrictions in some respects sharper than those of the South. "It is not humanity," said Jefferson Davis to the North in 1861, "that influences you in the position that you now occupy before the country. . . . It is that you may have a majority in the Congress of the United States and convert the government into an engine of Northern aggrandizement. It is that your section may grow in power and prosperity upon treasures unjustly taken from the South." (*A History of the South*, p. 190)

Most Republican leaders, while claiming they were "saving" the Union and preserving representative government, were undemocratic and despotic. The worst offenders were the Radical Republicans, but other Republicans were almost as bad. The Republicans and their generals imprisoned thousands of Northern citizens in order to suppress Northern opposition to the war. They shut down hundreds of Northern newspapers and jailed dozens of newspaper editors for expressing "unpatriotic" views. They suspended the writ of habeas corpus (protection against unlawful arrest), rigged elections, prevented two Northern legislatures from convening, and branded as "traitors" Northern political opponents who spoke out against Republican violations of civil rights. In one case, they arrested thirty-one members of the Maryland legislature and sealed

off the town where the legislature was meeting. When it became known that former president Franklin Pierce believed the war was cruel and unnecessary, Republicans accused him of treason and nearly had him arrested. (Pierce feared the true purpose of the war was to wipe out the states as sovereign entities and to drastically increase the power of the federal government in violation of the Constitution. Pierce also believed it was wrong to hold the Union together by force.)

The Republicans and their generals waged a shameful form of “total war” against the South, causing the deaths of some 50,000 Southern civilians and wiping out whole towns in the process. They hired thousands of unscrupulous mercenaries, including many criminals fresh from European jails. They violated just about every rule of civilized warfare known to man. They used tactics that today would justify prosecution for war crimes. A few Union generals, including George McClellan, objected to this cruel form of warfare, and at least one general, Don C. Buell, resigned from the army in protest--but these men were the exception, not the rule. On the other hand, the vast majority of Confederate generals refused to use the brutal tactics that so many Union generals were using. At one point, some Confederate officials urged Jefferson Davis to order Confederate forces to employ the barbaric tactics that were being used by Union generals like William Tecumseh Sherman and Phil Sheridan, but Davis refused. If the South had won, several Union generals could have been tried and hung for war crimes. Most Republican leaders, including Lincoln, strongly backed those generals. (A sobering collection of Union war atrocities is presented in Thomas Bland Keys’ book *The Uncivil War: Union Army and Navy Excesses in the Official Records*, Biloxi, Mississippi: The Beauvoir Press, 1991, which is based almost exclusively on Union army records.)

After the war, most Republicans in Congress continued to violate the Constitution. They imposed a clearly illegal military rule on the Southern states and proceeded to plunder those states for years. The Radicals and their supporters in the Union army accused and jailed Jefferson Davis on the absurd charge that he was involved in the conspiracy that killed Lincoln. They based this charge on evidence that was later found to be fraudulent. They tried to remove President Johnson from office for opposing their illegal plans to ravage the South and for daring to defy their attempt to prevent him from replacing Edwin Stanton as secretary of war. Can you imagine the outcry that would arise today if Congress tried to force the president to retain a cabinet member against his will?

The Radicals came close to establishing a military dictatorship in the name of “reconstructing” the defeated Southern states. The Radicals passed a bill that said the military didn’t have to obey the president’s orders unless the commanding general of the Army approved those orders (McDonald, *States’ Rights and the Union*, p. 213). The bill also made it a crime for any officer to obey orders except those that came from the commanding general (Brodie, *Thaddeus Stevens*, p. 298).

Just imagine what most Americans today would think if the secretary of defense refused to step down when suspended by the president but instead barricaded himself in his office, issued an order for the arrest of the man appointed to replace him, and asked friendly members of Congress to intervene. And imagine what most Americans would think if the commanding general of the Army then stationed troops around the Pentagon in order to keep the secretary of defense in power against the president’s express wishes. Impossible? Couldn’t happen in America? Well, that’s exactly what happened when President Johnson tried to replace Stanton as secretary of war. When Johnson appointed Lorenzo Thomas to replace Stanton, Stanton barricaded himself in his office, issued an order for Thomas’s arrest, and asked his fellow Radicals to help him remain in power. General Ulysses S. Grant then stationed troops around the War Department building and authorized them to call for reinforcements if necessary, causing fears that “a new civil war was about to erupt in the capital” (Elizabeth D. Leonard (*Lincoln’s Avengers: Justice, Revenge, and*

Reunion after the Civil War, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004, p. 279).

There were other Radical abuses. In January 1868, the Radicals and most of their fellow Republicans passed a bill, over Johnson's veto, that transferred all of Johnson's authority in Reconstruction to General Grant. The Radicals also worked to deny President Johnson his constitutional authority to appoint justices to the Supreme Court by amending the Judiciary Act so the president couldn't fill vacancies that might occur on the high court (McDonald, *States' Rights and the Union*, p. 211). After Edwin Stanton barricaded himself in his office and asked the Radicals for help, two Radicals, Senator Zachary Chandler and Representative John Logan, personally led a company of one hundred men to guard the War Department building (Brodie, *Thaddeus Stevens*, p. 335).

When even the Lincoln-packed Supreme Court tried to curb Republican lawlessness, the Radicals reacted with outrage. In the *Ex Parte Milligan* case, the high court finally gathered enough courage to conclude that it was illegal to impose military rule on civilians in non-combat areas where civil courts were still in operation (which was what the Republicans had been doing, *in the North*, for much of the war). The Radicals were furious with this ruling, partly because it implied they had committed judicial murder, since several civilians had been sentenced to death by federal military courts. Then, in *Ex Parte McCardle*, the Supreme Court upheld the right of habeas corpus and reaffirmed the principle that civilians couldn't be tried in military courts when civil courts were available. The Radicals were so angered by this decision that they introduced bills in Congress that would have (1) abolished the Supreme Court's jurisdiction in all habeas corpus cases, (2) ended all judicial review of acts of Congress, and (3) prohibited the high court from reviewing cases that involved "political questions," including the Reconstruction Act. This was an open attack on basic American concepts of government, justice, and due process. For example, if the Supreme Court were denied jurisdiction in habeas corpus cases, it would be unable to protect citizens against unlawful arrest and imprisonment. That was exactly what the Radicals wanted. Luckily, the bills were defeated. "Had they been enacted," notes McDonald, "the Court would have been destroyed as an arbiter of the Constitution" (*States' Rights and the Union*, p. 218).

I'm not arguing that all the Radicals were corrupt or that everything they believed was wrong. Although I share the view that many of the Radicals were more interested in power than in civil rights, I also believe that some of them were sincere. The Radicals deserve credit for eventually forcing Lincoln to provide equal pay for black Union soldiers during the war and for trying to provide food, clothing, and income for former slaves after the war. For the most part, the Radicals' positions on civil rights issues were commendable, enlightened, and moral. However, in many cases the Radicals used ruthless, illegal, and unethical methods to achieve their civil rights objectives, and some of their other objectives were dishonorable.

In a very real sense, the Civil War was not North vs. South; rather, it was hardline Republican leaders and certain Northern business interests vs. the rest of the country. Although the vast majority of Southerners supported the Confederacy, at least 40 percent of Northerners did not support the Republicans and wanted to halt or even abandon the federal invasion of the South. Before the war, dozens of Northern newspapers voiced the view that the South should be allowed to depart in peace. During the war, so many Northern citizens opposed Lincoln's policies that the Republicans had to impose military rule on large areas of the North.

A good indication of Lincoln's significant lack of Northern support can be seen in the results of the 1864 presidential election. Amazingly, Lincoln's opponent in that election, former Union general George McClellan, received 41 percent of the vote, even though by then a Northern victory seemed likely, even though the Republicans engaged in questionable polling-place tactics in certain areas,

and even though the Republicans had muzzled criticism of the war in much of the Northern press.

At just about any point in the war, it's probable that a majority of Americans opposed the use of force to hold the Union together. If Southern citizens had voted even in the 1864 election, McClellan may very well have received a majority of the popular vote, especially if the election had been conducted fairly. If the election had been held in 1862 and had included Southern citizens, Lincoln almost certainly would have lost the popular vote in a landslide. If Northern citizens had known in advance what Lincoln was going to do in response to secession, it's unlikely that he would have been elected in the first place. It should be remembered that when Lincoln won the 1860 election, he only received 39.9 percent of the popular vote. The conservative vote was split between three candidates, Stephen Douglas, John Breckinridge, and John Bell, each of whom, incidentally, later voiced opposition to using force to maintain the Union. Lincoln received about 1.9 million votes, while Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell received about 2.8 million votes. However, Lincoln won the election because 122 of the 152 Electoral College votes that he needed for victory were concentrated in just six Northern states.

One of the many untold stories of the Civil War is the fact that Indians, Hispanics, and African Americans supported and even fought for the Confederacy. The five tribes of the Indian Territory supported the Confederacy and contributed troops to the Confederate army. One Confederate general was a Cherokee Indian and was one of the last flag officers to surrender his troops at the end of the war.

Thousands of Hispanics served as soldiers in the Confederate army, and some even served as commissioned officers. In his book *Hispanic Confederates* (Clearfield Company, 1999), John O'Donnell-Rosales identifies 3,600 Hispanic Confederate soldiers by name and unit. The Confederate commissioner to northern Mexico was a Cuban named José Agustín Quintero. Hispanic American Santos Benavides commanded the Confederate 33rd Texas Cavalry, the Mexican-American unit that defeated Union forces in the 1864 Battle of Laredo. Santiago Vidaurri, the governor of the Mexican border states of Coahuila and Nuevo León, offered to have northern Mexico secede and join the Confederacy, but Jefferson Davis declined the offer because he was afraid Lincoln would then blockade Mexican ports.

There is evidence that thousands of African Americans fought for the Confederacy. For example, the chief inspector of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Dr. Lewis Steiner, reported that he saw about 3,000 well-armed black Confederate soldiers in Stonewall Jackson's army and that those soldiers were "manifestly an integral portion of the Southern Confederate Army." In a Union army battle report, a "General D. Stuart" complained about the deadly effectiveness of the black Confederate soldiers whom his troops had encountered. Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest had slaves and free blacks serving in units under his command, and said of them, "These boys stayed with me . . . and better Confederates did not live." After the Battle of Gettysburg, Union forces took seven black Confederate soldiers as prisoners, as was noted in a Northern newspaper at the time, which said, ". . . reported among the rebel prisoners were seven blacks in Confederate uniforms fully armed as soldiers." None other than African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass complained that there were "many" blacks in the Confederate army who were armed and "ready to shoot down" Union soldiers. During the Battle of Chickamauga, slaves serving Confederate soldiers armed themselves and asked permission to join the fight—and when they received that permission they fought commendably. Their commander, Captain J. B. Briggs, later noted that these men "filled a portion of the line of advance as well as any company of the regiment." There are numerous accounts of slaves assisting Confederate soldiers in battle and helping them to

escape capture afterward (see, for example, Francis Springer, *War for What?*, Springfield, Tennessee: Nippert Publishing Company, 1990, pp. 172-183). Two weeks after the Fort Sumter incident, several companies of black Confederate volunteer soldiers passed through Augusta, Georgia, on their way to Virginia (J. H. Segars and Charles Kelly Barrow, editors, *Black Southerners in Confederate Armies: A Collection of Historical Accounts*, Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Lion Books, 2001, pp. 3-4). After the war, hundreds of African Americans received Confederate veterans' pensions. Photos of reunions of Confederate veterans show African Americans in attendance. As strange as it may seem to most people in our day, many Southern slaves and free blacks felt loyalty to the South and viewed Union troops as invaders.

Another untold story of the Civil War is the brutal way that many Union forces treated Southern slaves. One Union unit, commanded by Colonel John Turchin, moved into Athens, Georgia, and, with Turchin's approval, spent weeks in the slave huts "debauching the females." Turchin's superior officers court-martialed and convicted him for his crimes. (Amazingly, Lincoln later promoted Turchin to brigadier general.) In another case, a Union colonel, Ignatz Kappner, reported that Union troops "broke en masse in the camps of the colored women and are committing all sorts of outrage." In some cases, Union soldiers would torture and even kill slaves who would not reveal the location of their masters' valuables. Union soldiers usually viewed captured or runaway slaves as "contrabands" and often mistreated them. Says McPherson,

While northern soldiers had no love for slavery, most of them had no love for slaves either. . . . While some Yanks treated contrabands with a degree of equity and benevolence, *the more typical response was indifference, contempt, and cruelty*. Soon after Union forces captured Port Royal, South Carolina, in November 1861, a private described an incident there that made him "ashamed of America": "About 8-10 soldiers from the New York 47th chased some Negro women but they escaped, so they took a Negro girl about 7-9 years old, and raped her." From Virginia a Connecticut soldier wrote that some men of his regiment had taken "two Nigger wenches [women] . . . turned them upon their heads, and put tobacco, chips, sticks, lighted cigars and sand into their behinds." Even when Billy Yank welcomed the contrabands, he often did so from utilitarian rather than humanitarian motives. "Officers and men are having an easy time," wrote a Maine soldier from occupied Louisiana in 1862. "We have Negroes to do all fatigue work, cooking and washing clothes." (*The Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 497, emphasis added)

The case of the Union army's treatment of the slaves in Bisland, Louisiana, is another example of federal mistreatment of Southern slaves. When Union forces occupied the area around Bisland, they caused the deaths of numerous slaves and left hundreds of others in terrible condition. When Confederate forces recaptured the area, they found shallow graves where slaves had been hastily buried. They found a local sugar house filled with dead and dying slaves. In one location the roads were lined with slaves who were half-starved, sick, and unable to care for themselves. Upon seeing the plight of the Bisland slaves, the Confederate troops provided them with food, medicine, and transportation, saving hundreds of them from certain death (James and Walter Kennedy, *The South Was Right!*, Second Edition, Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 1994, pp. 143-144; David Edmonds, editor, *The Conduct of Federal Troops in Louisiana*, Lafayette, Louisiana: The Acadiana Press, 1988, pp. 116-119).

Textbooks note that well over 100,000 slaves served in the Union army, but they rarely inform the reader that thousands of those men were forced to serve. Union army records and other sources document that thousands of slaves were abducted and then forced into military service; some were taken from their plantations during Union raids, while others were seized in areas that were occupied by federal forces. General John Logan told General Grant, "A major of colored troops is

here capturing negroes, with or without their consent.” General Lovell Rousseau informed General G. H. Thomas that “officers in command of colored troops are in constant habit of pressing [i.e., forcing] all able-bodied slaves into the military service of the U.S.” Even in the Union slave state of Kentucky, federal gunboats raided plantations, “carrying off slaves to help build military railroads, fortifications, and wagon roads” (Klingaman, *Abraham Lincoln and the Road to Emancipation*, p. 161). In May 1862, federal troops in South Carolina forcefully rounded up hundreds of slaves in compliance with General David Hunter’s order to raise two regiments of black troops from slaves (or “contrabands”) in his region.

The conscription of slaves by federal forces continued even after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. For example, several months after the proclamation was issued, General Innis Palmer wanted to provide “laborers” for federal troops at Fort Monroe. He informed his superior on September 1, 1864, that even though he was having trouble “collecting the colored men” for this purpose, he had already sent 221 of them and was expecting to get “a large lot” the next day, adding that “. . . the negroes will not go voluntarily, so I am obliged to force them” (Keys, *The Uncivil War*, p. 106).

Southern family journals and letters contain numerous accounts of Union soldiers forcefully removing slaves from their homes, even when the slaves made it clear they didn’t want to leave (see, for example, Henry Steele Commager, editor, *The Civil War Archive: The History of the Civil War in Documents*, New York: Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2000, pp. 333-336, 675-677).

I’m not suggesting that all slaves remained loyal to their masters or to the South during the war. Many thousands of Southern slaves did in fact flock to Union lines, just as thousands of colonial slaves flocked to British lines during the Revolutionary War. But many Southern slaves remained loyal, and quite a few of them viewed Union troops as invaders.

What If the South Had Been Allowed to Go in Peace?

Did the world end when America became a separate country from England? No, and not only have America and England long been staunch allies and close trading partners, but their peoples continue to share many friendships and family relationships. Norway seceded from Sweden, without a war, and the two countries still enjoy friendly relations. Although I don’t advocate modern secession, and although I’m proud of the many good things that America has done, I don’t think it would have been the end of the world if the South had been allowed to go in peace.

I think both the U.S.A. and the C.S.A. would have flourished. Interchange between the states of the two nations would have continued almost exactly as before. If anything, the presence of a prosperous low-tax, limited-government Southern confederacy would have been a powerful incentive for the federal government to limit taxes and to adhere more closely to the limitations imposed on it by the Constitution.

Some critics have suggested that if the Confederacy had survived, World War II may have had a different outcome. But the fact that England and America separated didn’t prevent them from later joining forces to defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in World War II. The U.S. and the Confederacy certainly would have teamed up to do the same thing.

If the South had been permitted to go in peace, slavery would have died a natural death in a matter of a few decades, if not sooner. Before the war, even some Northern politicians, such as William Seward, said slavery was a dying institution. The percentage of Southern whites that belonged to slaveholding families dropped by 5 percent from 1850-1860 (Divine et al, editor, *America Past and*

Present, p. 389). Historian Allan Nevins noted that by the 1850s "slavery was dying all around the edges of its domain" (*The Emergence of Lincoln*, Volume 2, p. 469). Although slavery was still economically profitable, its days were numbered. Interestingly, some of the most vocal Northern abolitionists, including Wendell Phillips, welcomed the South's secession because they believed Southern slavery would die out more quickly if the South were no longer part of the Union.

If the South had been allowed to leave in peace, over 600,000 soldiers (over half of them from the North) would have been spared death. Over 50,000 Southern civilians likewise would have been spared death. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers would not have been wounded for life. Millions of families would have been spared sorrow and anguish over their dead and wounded loved ones. Billions of dollars in property damage would have been avoided. And, race relations would not have suffered the poisoning that they experienced during and after the war.

"But," some will ask, "wouldn't the Union have been destroyed if the Confederacy had survived?" This was one of Lincoln's erroneous arguments. The Union would not have been "destroyed" if the South had been allowed to leave in peace. The Union still would have had 23 states, compared to the Confederacy's 11 states, and it would have retained control over the vast western territories. The Union's population was more than twice the size of the Confederacy's. In addition, the Union had nine times more factories than the Confederacy, twenty times more pig iron, seventeen times more textiles, two and a half times more railroad tracks, thirty-two times more firearms, and nine times more production value. The Union still would have been one of the largest and most powerful countries on the earth even without the eleven states of the Confederacy. So the Union would have been just fine if the Republicans had allowed the South to go in peace. (Of course, if the two nations had lived in peace, the Union would have needed to lower its tariff in order to compete with the low Confederate tariff, but that could have been done in a matter of days by the U.S. Congress.)

What would the South be like today if the Confederacy had survived? No one can say with certainty, but it's likely that taxes of all kinds would be much lower. Citizens would have much less government interference in their lives. Parents would have more control over their children's education and over their local schools. Southern schools would most likely allow voluntary prayer, moral instruction, nativity plays at Christmas time, and formal Bible reading (as our schools used to do until the 1960s when the Supreme Court suddenly decided these things were somehow "unconstitutional"). There would be tough anti-pornography laws. The lives of unborn children would be protected by law. There would be no question that marriage should be reserved for a man and a woman. And a state government could place a Ten Commandments monument in front of a state judicial building without having to worry about a federal judge wrongfully ordering its removal.

However, all this being said, I think that if the South had been allowed to go in peace, it would have eventually rejoined the Union. But, if not, I don't think it would have been the end of the world if the South had remained independent. England and America have managed to do very well as separate nations. So have Norway and Sweden. I think the Confederacy and the United States could have done the same thing.

Final Thoughts

Some people think it is unpatriotic or divisive to defend the Southern side of the Civil War. As a retired U.S. Army veteran and a flag-waving patriot, I reject that view. Confederate citizens were *Americans* too. They were citizens of the "Confederate States of America." Their heroes included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Mason, Davy Crockett, and Andrew

Jackson. The official Confederate seal featured the image of George Washington on his horse. The Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, was a former U.S. Army officer, a genuine hero in the Mexican War, an outstanding U.S. secretary of war, and a highly respected member of the U.S. Senate. Dozens of other Confederate officials had likewise served faithfully in the U.S. government. One of the members of the Confederate Congress was former U.S. president John Tyler.

It is time for the demonization and smearing of the Confederacy to stop. Compared with other nations of its day, the Confederacy was one of the most democratic countries in the world. Even during the war, the Confederacy held elections and had a vibrant free press. In fact, on balance, the Confederacy was more democratic than some nations in our day. Confederate citizens enjoyed every right that we now enjoy, if not more. The Confederacy sought peace with the federal government and only fought because it was invaded. The Confederate Constitution was patterned after the U.S. Constitution and contained improvements that even some Northern commentators acknowledged were praiseworthy.

Yes, the Confederacy permitted slavery, but it left the door open for the admission of free states and for the abolition of slavery at the state level. Let's keep in mind, too, that the American colonies permitted slavery for decades, that the United States permitted slavery for over half a century, that several Northern states made huge fortunes from the slave trade, and that many of our founding fathers were slaveholders, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, James Madison, John Rutledge, George Mason, and Benjamin Franklin. Let's also keep in mind that most Confederate citizens did not own slaves, and that by 1864 key Confederate leaders were prepared to abolish slavery.

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