

History is His Story

God chose to free a bunch of slaves, the Jews, in order to lay the groundwork for his ultimate covenant of freeing us from the bondage of sin. God hates slavery, said the Abolitionists, a movement against slavery that originated in churches in the generation before the Civil War. Lincoln took this failing attempt of Christians to defeat slavery and translated it into easy moral reasoning fit for his election in 1860. But today there are new ways of looking at the conflict that disagree with the traditional historic views and the international community of historians. How shall we understand this?

Lost in most modern progressive historic writings is the role of the politics of the day. Cotton was so valuable and desired worldwide that it amounted to half the exports of USA. It was a non-crop until the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, then became virtually the single crop of the South after 1820. It still took hand-picking and slaves were so valued they sold for the price of a good house (\$100,000 in today's money). Plantation owners grew fabulously rich but represented only 5% of the population of the South. Many more southerners were hillbillies, micro-farmers, and shopowners. The plantations became a huge lobbying group, bought newspapers, and swayed public opinion. Nonetheless, 13 anti-slavery churches existed in Charleston in 1861. At the time, the North had 21 million people; the South, 9 M with 4M being slaves. The North had almost all the manufacturing, naval power, and finances. But the secret weapon of the Confederacy's Democrats were the Northern Democrats. N. Democrats had been organized by Martin Van Buren of NY with the goal of an Urban Plantation. Immigrants in ghettos were held in subjugation, denied many rights until they spoke English and became educated. Manufacturers were the 'plantation owners'. The goal of the South in seceding was to divide the country into two until the N. Democrats could win and bring down the hated Lincoln who opposed slavery in every form. (This strategy explains why the South did not simply stay put, since slavery could only have been abolished only by constitutional amendment—'fat chance' politically) In 1860 there was not one slave owned in USA by a Republican, the anti-slavery party, but many N. Democrats tacitly approved of the institution.

Progressive historians dislike this traditional view. They dethrone Lincoln as a closet racist and claim the war was about states rights, and neglect the role of Northern Democrats as allies of the South. They quote Lincoln writing to Horace Greely about how he didn't care about slavery, just saving the union. But this came at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, when Lincoln was coy, trying to hold onto border slave states and "War" Democrats, those who supported the union but let Lincoln know that they would switch sides if the war became about slavery. Lincoln was walking a tightrope politically, pretending The Union was the cause. Jefferson Davis, meanwhile was giving fiery speeches about how it was all about slavery and how they had to simply hang on until the N. Democrats defeated Lincoln and demanded a truce whereupon the South could become a separate, slave country, or a special section of USA.

Part of the reason for this cherry-picking of facts by modern progressives is due to an earlier attempt at historic revisionism at the end of the 19th century. This "concealment version" held that the Southern instigation of war was not due to partisan disagreement over slavery but to states rights and defense of their homeland. This was the narrative of the 1915 movie, *Birth of a Nation* and the resurgence of the KKK after WW I. It was thinly disguised racism. After the Civil War the partisan bickering didn't stop. Democrats opposed the 13th 14th and 15th Amendments. The use of racial terrorism brought down the Reconstruction, running off Yankees and replacing the slavery with a version of bond serfdom in share-cropping and Jim Crow laws.

John Wilkes Booth was a typical War Democrat from Maryland, a slave state, that found himself switching sides after Atlanta fell to Sherman in the summer of 1864. But Booth was no lone wolf. In 1864 Democrat newspapers all over the North, even as far as The *LaCrosse Wisconsin Democrat* proclaimed assassination of Lincoln and Grant. Booth echoed this, "our cause is almost lost and something decisive and great must be done."

That bitter partisanship led to USA's worst war, is somewhat embarrassing for modern Americans. Such entrenched racism is embarrassing for Democrats. Northern casual ethnicism employed by the very manufacturers who made us grow is embarrassing to Northerners. Still the lesson remains. Faith's lesson remains too: God detests bondage and the worst bondage is our sin. God put Himself on the cross to save us when all hope was lost. God inspires men to fight for the freedom and liberty of others.