

Candidate 1 evidence

SECTION 5 – USA: “A House Divided”

33. “The treatment of slaves in the antebellum South was an absolute evil.” How valid is this view?

During the 1850s, some 385 000 families owned 4 million slaves in the antebellum South. Overall, only 30% of the population in the South were slaveowners. Yet it cannot be denied that the South was inextricably tied to its “peculiar institution”. In the infamous words of Alexander Stephens, the South’s “cornerstone rests, on the fundamental belief that the negro is not equal to the white man, that subordination is his natural and normal condition”. By its very nature, the historiographical debate on the institution of slavery has been a hotly debated one. The traditional view, as propounded by Ulrich B. Phillips, is that slavery was essentially a benign institution. Arguments of slavery’s benignity were most famously revitalised by the two cliometricians Fogel and Engerman in the 1970s. Ultimately, however, as countless historians such as Kenneth Stampp have noted, it is very difficult to argue that slavery was not an evil institution.

Ulrich Phillips, a Southerner born in 1877, seems to have had a idyllic childhood in the old South. His rather romantic view and appreciation of traditional Southern values thus led him conclude that the foundation of this society, slavery in other words, “could not have been an unqualified evil”. In a distinctively racist slant, he argued that because the black was essentially a child in mind, the master took on a paternal role, protecting the slave from himself as well as from others. He spoke appreciatively of the relationship between owner and owned, which he considered was characterised by “benevolence, kind-hearted friendship and mutual loyalty”. While conceding that slaves were punished, Phillips insisted that these “well-bred” and “talented” slaveowners were essentially benign in their conduct, and that punishment was actually borne with “light-heartedness, affection and submission”. The views of Ulrich Phillips largely defined the historiographical field of the institution of slavery well into the 20th century.

However, Phillips’ version of history is, quite simply, wrong. As Hugh Tulloch correctly notes, what is so remarkable is how long this historical duplicity held sway among the American historical profession. In actuality, there are many weaknesses that can be recognised which greatly undermine the strength of Phillips’ arguments. For example, Phillips drew his his statistical data from 200 plantations which had over 100 slaves. These, the very largest plantations in the antebellum south, made up only 1% of slave plantations of the south and are not representative of the treatment of slaves across the whole of the antebellum South. Furthermore, Phillips quite deliberately gleaned many of his primary sources regarding the benignity of slavery from the likes of William Russell and Frederick Olmsted, men known to be staunch defenders of slavery. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the problem with Phillips’ interpretation is that it focusses almost entirely on the issue from the perspective of the slaveowner. As Carter Woodworth writes, Phillips paid little consideration to the slaves themselves, choosing instead to exalt the virtues of those who had profitted from their labour.

However, it was not until 1950 that the first sustained assault on Phillips' interpretations were published. Kenneth Stampp, in his seminal "The Peculiar Institution", sought to overturn many of Phillips' views which had dominated the field up to that time. He argued that cruelty was endemic in all sections of slave society and that it was, indeed, an unqualified evil. If slaves were idle as Phillips had commonly insisted, it was because they were forced to work sixteen hour days from dawn to dusk. Slaves toiled in harsh conditions on an insufficient diet, causing illnesses such as beriberi, scurvy and pellagra. Furthermore, Stampp emphasised the inherent injustice of slavery: the slave family was far from sacrosanct, and almost all lived in constant fear of separation. In response to Olmsted's remarks supplied by Phillips, Stampp furnished comments made to Olmsted by a Mississippi farmer: "I'd rather be dead than be a nigger on these big plantations". Overall, the comprehensive rebuttal of Stampp et al. greatly weakens the validity of Phillips' conclusions; slavery, instead, was indeed a harsh institution, if not absolutely unqualified in its evil.

Nevertheless, even the balanced and measured interpretation of Stampp is not without its flaws. Firstly, as many scholars have realised, Stampp seems to follow too closely the work of Phillips. Because Stampp desired to overturn each of Phillips' arguments one by one, Stampp used many of the same evidence that Phillips had used before him; he had also used many of the same factors (such as housing, food, and medical care) in his assessment of slavery as an institution. However, perhaps the most notable problem with Stampp's interpretation is that he focuses almost entirely on literary sources, and as Hugh Tulloch writes, these can often be misleading and not representative of the situation's reality. Overall, in trying to reverse the historiographical conclusions of Phillips, Stampp may have gone a little too far in the other direction.

In great contrast to the approach of Stampp was that of Fogel and Engerman, the two cliometricians who sought, once again to overturn the prevailing views of the day by arguing that slavery was essentially a benign institution. Fogel and Engerman too had an underlying motive in their writing of history, albeit one far less sinister than that of Ulrich Phillips. In their writing of "Time on the Cross", Fogel and Engerman desired to "stamp out the belief that african americans were without achievement, without development... in their first two hundred and fifty years on American soil. Using what Tulloch terms "curiously austere methological claims", Fogel and Engerman came to the conclusion that slavery was a fundamentally benign institution. They argued that there was a hierarchy to slave societies, in which rewards and incentives such as better housing, more rations and even a steady income, were to be had. This created what could be well be termed a comprehensive "cradle to grave network system" in the institution of slavery.

However, the vast majority of Fogel and Engerman's claims have been disapproved, mostly by fellow cliometricians. Take, for example, their infamous claim that slave hands were whipped an average of "0.7 times per year". Some historians saw the mere quantification as an affront; others decided to conclusively refute this statistic with conclusive data. Herbert Gutman ultimately argued that Fogel and Engerman grossly overestimated the number of slave hands, used innaccurate data for the number of whippings, and should have considered that whippings, in themselves, were far from the

only means of punishment for slaves. Overall, while Fogel and Engerman's conclusions are somewhat debateable, some of their studies – such as the comparisons between slave units and apartments in Northern cities – do indeed highlight that slavery may not have been an unqualified evil (although certainly not as benign as they have made them out to be either). Furthermore, we should certainly give them credit, as Thomas Weiss does, for enlarging the scope of historiography, for prompting research in new areas, and for “forcing us to remember the variations in space, time and size of slaveholding”.

The work of Fogel and Engerman heralded a new era in which much more attention has been afforded to statistical data, black folktales, and other previously neglected areas of evidence. As a result we now have a much more nuanced and detailed view of the treatment of slaves in the antebellum South. John Blassingame, for example, argued that slaves showed a deal of resilience and autonomy in their everyday activities; although conditions were difficult, they were able to cultivate an appreciation for family and culture with much success. Eugene Genovese, influenced by the work of Phillips, Fogel, Engerman and other predecessors, argues that slaves could indeed be encouraged by incentives and may have derived some satisfaction from their work. Nevertheless, he counters Fogel and Engerman directly, insisting correctly that even if slaves earned rewards due to factors such as good harvests, this should not be misconstrued as slaves benefitting from the system. From the work of these historians, we now have a much more complex view of slavery. It was certainly not a benign institution, but neither was it an absolutely unqualified evil.

In conclusion, the historiographical debate surrounding slavery has always been a fiercely contested one, and will undoubtedly remain so. However, it must be remembered that the slavery stretched across a vast landscape, and affecting the lives of some 4 million in slavery. The experience of all these slaves, of course, could not have been uniform. Nevertheless, one cannot forget that the institution of slavery deprived these men, women, and children of their freedom and sought to remove their humanity. In consequence, the debate on whether slavery was marked by more harshness or more benignity is almost beside the question. Ultimately, the view that slavery was an “absolute evil” may be somewhat difficult to justify, but it cannot be denied that slavery in the antebellum South undoubtedly was a very evil institution.

38. Evaluate the usefulness of Source A as evidence of the reasons for the tensions between North and South during the period 1850 to 1854.

Overall, Source A is a very useful source as evidence of reasons for the tensions between North and South during the period 1850 to 1854.

1. Firstly, the source says that they have been brought together to defend "the rights which the states we represent are entitled to in the Union." This is useful because it shows a key reason for why tensions were increasing: the South believed that their power to self-governance and the autonomy of states was being diminished.
2. The source says, "the relation of master and slave was expressly recognised and guarded in the Constitution". This is useful because it shows tensions increased because the South believed that their right to hold slaves as property was being diminished.
3. The source write about the move "to exclude slaveholders with their property from the territories". This is useful because it shows tensions increased because the South was resentful that the slaveholders would not be able to take their slaves with them to new territories that had come about due to westward expansion.

The provenance of the source also makes it very useful.

4. Firstly the source is drawn from the 'Resolutions from the 2nd Nashville Convention'. This makes the source useful as this meeting was convened in the South as the result of beliefs that the power of southern states was being diminished, and that action should be taken.
5. The Nashville Convention was convened as a result of new territory, most prominently California, being admitted to the Union. This makes the source useful as evidence of reasons why tensions increased because the South believed that her power and representation in national government would be lessened by the admission of a free state to the Union.

However, the source does not mention or does not go into detail about numerous other reasons for the tensions between North and South during the period of 1850 to 1854.

6. Firstly, the source does not mention the fundamental economic differences that were starting to divide the North and South. Charles and Mary Beard argues that the divisions between an agrarian South and an industrial North were a key reason for why tensions increased between the North and South.
7. The state of Massachusetts produced more manufactured goods than the whole of the South combined. This supports the Beardian view that there was consequently tension between the two sections because they had grown so different.
8. The source does not go into detail about the great problem of slavery which was becoming increasingly important for the North and consequently became a source of great tension. Alan Farmer argues that the abolitionists, in particular, did much to make the problem of slavery a matter of such contention.

9. The source does not mention the great consequences of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which did much to increase tensions between North and South. For example, Stephen Douglas' clause of popular sovereignty was decried in the North as evidence of slave power conspiracy.
10. The Source does not mention the "Appeal of the Independent Democrats" which also increased tensions between North and South significantly by portraying a pernicious slave power bent on converting the virgil soil of Kansas to a terrible place of slaves and masters.
11. This view is supported by James McPherson, who argues that the Appeal did much to fan the flames of sectionalism and became the "centrepiece" for an outpouring of antislavery rhetoric, thereby increasing tensions even further.
12. The source does not go into detail about the core differences in ideology between North and South. The North began to see itself by the 1850s as a place that valued the importance of "free labour" something diametrically opposed to the existence of slavery in the South.

Overall, Source A is very useful as evidence of the reasons for the tensions between North and South during the period, but does not cover all the reasons responsible for creating tensions.

39. How fully does Source B explain the reasons why Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation?

Overall, Source B explains the reasons why Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to only a limited extent.

1. Firstly the source says “dissension over dealing with slavery flared within the army”. This shows that one reason why Lincoln issued the proclamation was because fugitive slaves escaping into Union army camps was creating difficulties for his administration.
2. The source says “radicals and abolitionists kept up demands for general emancipation”. This shows that Lincoln may have issued the proclamation because of pressures from voluble radical groups both within the Republican Party and beyond.
3. The source says “moderant Republicans now expressed increasing impatience with the administration”. This suggests that Lincoln yielded to pressures from the more conservative wing of his party as well in his decision to issue the proclamation

However, the source could explain the reasons for why Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation much more fully.

4. The view of the source that fugitive slaves were key to why Lincoln issued the proclamation is supported by Barbara Fields and Ira Berlin. They argue that black people brought about the proclamation by bringing the matter into their own hands by escaping across enemy lines and that Lincoln was merely forced to recognise their defacto freedom.
5. However, this view can be contested. James Rawley argues that although one can recognise that escaped slaves were a nuisance for Lincoln, the way in which Lincoln ordered Fremont to stop emancipating escaped slaves highlights that Lincoln was not forced to issue the emancipation proclamation because of their actions.

6. Lincoln also ordered General McClellan in his Maryland Campaign to keep enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law. This suggests that the the problem of escaped slaves was not a crucial reason as to why Lincoln ultimately chose to issue the proclamation.
7. Eric Foner has also expressed te view that the main reason Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation was due to both the actions and influences of others, and the gradual maturation of his character. In other words, Lincoln gradually saw the USA as a bi-racial society and emancipation was therefore the logical conclusion.
8. However this view can be contested as Lincoln’s ultimate actions over emancipation (immediate not gradual emancipation, no provisions for colonisation), seem to deviate substantially from Lincoln’s original thinking on emanipation and race relations.
9. This is evidenced by the fact that Lincoln continued to pursue “the chimera of emancipated proclamation” even after the war began, and also his words at the Inaugural Address when he said that he would not interfere with slavery where it already existed. This suggests that Eric Foner’s reasons for why Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation may be somewhat flawed.
10. It is arguable that military necessity was a key reason why Lincoln chose to emancipate the slaves. This is evidenced by his own words, [emancipation] ‘works doubly, strengthening us and weakening the enemy’.
11. However this is not to say that Lincoln did not motivated somewhat by his own personal convictions as well in the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation. As he himself said, “if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong”.
12. Lincoln’s belief in the rectitude in the Emancipation Proclamation is futher demonstrated by his own words on the proclamation: “if my name goes down in history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it”. This suggests that his personal hostility towards slavery was also a key reason why he chose to ultmate issue the proclamation

Overall, Source B only explains the reasons of why Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to a limited extent.

40. How much do Sources C and D reveal about differing interpretations of the reasons for Southern defeat by 1865?

Overall, Sources C and D reveal a good deal of information about why the South lost by 1865. However, no two sources can completely reveal the reasons for Southern defeat.

1. Source C says “we suffered hunger, been without sufficient clothing, barefooted...”. This shows that a key reason for Southern defeat was due to a scarcity of resources.
2. The source says “there is not a day that at least twenty men are not taken out dead”. This shows that one reason for Southern defeat was that by 1865, they had suffered great losses and their forces were now heavily depleted.

3. The source says that the key reason why they lost was that they were "outnumbered at least five if not ten to one". This shows that a main reason for Confederate defeat was that their forces were substantially numerically smaller than that of the Union's.
4. The view of the source is supported by Richard Current who argues that it was ultimately the South's inferiority in men and materials of war that ultimately led to their defeat. The South lost because God, as is almost always the case, was on the side of the big battalions.

Source D argues that the main reason for Confederate defeat was their overt respect for democratic values.

5. Source D says, "Southern soldiers reserved their democratic right to interpret orders broadly or simply disobey orders that they deemed unreasonable". This shows that Confederates in the army were not well-disciplined because they believed in asserting their democratic rights and did not follow orders that they did not want to follow.
6. The source says "privates both resented and envied the privileges that officers enjoyed". This shows that the South may have been defeated because officers and leaders were not respected by their subordinates.
7. The source says that Confederate soldiers "put their officers in their places by petitioning for the resignation of unpopular commanders". This shows that the Confederacy may have lost because they were so in favour of democratic processes that they tried to get rid of commanders that they did not like.
8. Closely allied to the view of the source is the idea that the South "died of states' rights". This was first proposed by Frank Owsley, who argued that states were much too concerned about themselves and did not pull together to defeat the North.
9. This view is evidenced by the actions of Governor Brown of Georgia. He deliberately undermined the Confederate war effort by refusing to fulfil quotas of food and supplies, by enrolling thousands of Georgians in bogus state militias so as to avoid the draft, and by refusing to surrender "Georgia's" weapons to the Confederacy. In doing so, he arguably undermined the war effort and may have caused Southern defeat.
10. There are many other reasons for Southern defeat. The historian Merton Coulter argued of a "lack of will", and that the South were defeated because they simply did not work hard enough and long enough to secure victory.
11. In "Why the South Lost the Civil War", Beringer et al. argue in a similar fashion that the South lacked a strong sense of nationalism and did not know what they were truly fighting for, and that this was why they were ultimately defeated.
12. James McPherson argues that it was not a "lack of will" but a "loss of will" that caused the South to be defeated by 1865. He argues that war weariness and military victories causes loss of will and not vice versa, and this was what ultimately caused Confederate defeat.
13. It has also been argued that the South may have wanted to win on a subconscious level. Because of their guilt over slavery, Confederates may have not wanted to win and consequently did not try hard enough to secure victory.

14. The problem of leadership is also frequently cited as having been key to Confederate defeat. Jefferson Davis is frequently cited as having been a poor leader; his strained relationships with members of his cabinet such as Alexander Stephens arguably undermined the war effort and contributed to Confederate defeat.
15. Another key reason why the South was defeated was their flawed economic policies. The Confederate treasury raised money primarily through the issuing of paper money rather than bonds or taxation; this caused rampant inflation which undermined Confederate will to keep on fighting the war, leading to eventual defeat.
16. It can also be argued that it was not the South that lost the war, but rather the North that won. It is arguable that generals like Grant and Sherman who utilised a strategy of "simultaneous movement all along the line" devastated the Confederacy and were the main reason why they were defeated.

Overall, why Sources C and D do offer much about differing interpretations of the reasons for Southern defeat, there are numerous other reasons why the Confederacy was defeated which it does not cover.