

Religion and the Civil War

American Religious History

Religion and abolitionism

- Readyng America for the millennium
 - Evangelization: American Tract Society, 1825
 - American Temperance Society, 1825
 - American Antislavery Society, 1833
 - Slavery = America's biggest sin
 - No protection for women or families
 - No curbs on power of slaveowners
 - Contradicts the overall sense of the Bible
 - Northern evangelists support abolition

Religion and the defense of slavery

- Slavery is Biblical
 - No passage condemns slavery
 - Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22
 - "Servants, obey in all things your masters"
 - Gen. 17:12; Deut. 20:10-11; 1 Cor. 7:21; Rom. 13:1,7; 1 Tim. 6:1-2
 - The curse of Ham, Gen. 9:25-27
 - His descendants to be servants to his brothers
- Slavery is moral
 - Slaves taken care of, protected, Christianized
 - Masters like the patriarchs of the Old Testament

Slaves and religion

- Denmark Vesey conspiracy, 1821
 - African Methodists implicated
 - Methodists nearly banned
 - All-slave congregations outlawed
- Slaves in white churches
- On plantations, masters attend services
- "Hush arbors": meeting in secret

Denominations split over slavery

- 1845: Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South
- 1845: American Baptists and Southern Baptists
- 1861: Presbyterian Church in the USA and Presbyterian Church in the CSA (later US)
- Disciples of Christ & Churches of Christ (1907)
- Episcopalians maintain unity
- Catholics also united, but pro-Southern
- Common-sense reading of Bible a terrible failure

Religion and the Civil War, 1861-1865

- Both sides appeal to God
 - Southern Constitution explicitly invokes God
- Religion: important consolation to soldiers
 - Many revivals in camps of both sides
- What did this terrible war mean?
- Northerners: God punished the South for slavery
 - Lincoln: The nation was punished for slavery
- Southerners: Why did God allow defeat?
 - Punished for their sins (but not for slavery!)

Religion and Reconstruction

- Whites control Southern churches; blacks leave
- Creation of black churches without whites
 - Independent, mainly Baptist in the countryside
 - Successful urban AME and AMEZ missionizing
 - Free to have own style of religion
- White churches support segregation, white rule
 - Blacks “naturally” immoral
 - Protect “true” Christianity & pure white women
 - Ku Klux Klan; lynching, torture, violence, terror
- For North, new sins: alcohol, prostitutes, Catholics