New Facts About Slavery In the Antebellum South

SLAVERY IS A BAD THING. But was it so bad in the Old South as to justify a war killing hundreds of thousands of white Americans on both sides of the Southern secession? Probably not. But, furthermore, the so-called Civil War was not even about slavery in the first place. It was about economic issues such as tariffs—admittedly not as “sexy” a controversy as the slavery debate. TBR author Clint Lacy serves up some surprises.

BY CLINT E. LACY

In Stanley K. Lott’s book The Truth About American Slavery the reader is introduced to the subject through a picture of Abraham Lincoln found on the cover. It is a picture that depicts the most popular version of the 16th president of the United States, kind, honest, caring and benevolent (shown right).

As Lott describes it (p. 5, “About the Cover”):

Richmond, Va. fell on April 3rd 1865. On April 4th, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln visited the Confederate [c]apital. In one of the most historic events of Lincoln’s presidency, renowned artist Thomas Nast captured this scene in this sketch. This messianic scene shows Lincoln being praised and almost worshipped by freed slaves. The former Nast sketch was published in Harper’s Weekly shortly after . . . Thus we see that even before his death, the cult worship of Lincoln had begun.

Thus begins Stanley K. Lott’s debunking of this myth. As he writes (13): “The No. 2 lie [in American history] is that the Civil War was fought over slavery.” (Lott lists Columbus’s “discovering” of America as the No. 1 myth.)

The author wastes no time in painting a new verbal picture of “the Great Emancipator”—one that is less kind and benevolent but more honest. Caring, yes, but more about politics and agenda than about “the African race.” As evidence, Lott offers up Lincoln’s first inaugural address, in which he stated that he had no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with slavery in the states where it exists and that he had no lawful right to do so, and had no inclination to do so.

As further evidence, Lott offers the fact that when Union generals John Fremont and David Hunter issued emancipation proclamations in their military districts, Lincoln promptly revoked their proclamations, and later Lincoln relieved Fremont of his duties.

Lott, however, delves deeper into the subject of Lincoln’s relationship with the slaves than merely exposing the myth of Lincoln as the “emancipator.”

The latest trend in the media and politics is to blame the American South for slavery. Some states have gone so far as to apologize for the institution. Mr. Lott points out that the Portuguese commenced the slave trade in 1443. This was followed by the Spanish, the Dutch and the English. The first black slaves in America (disregarding slavery among the Indian nations and disregarding white indentured servants, who were actually a species of slave) were introduced in Jamestown, Va. in 1620. More importantly,
AFRICAN SLAVERS: Clockwise from upper left: (1) Black-on-black slavery is an ancient and continuing African tradition. Here, African slave traders transport shackled African captives in a dugout canoe to sell them downriver as slaves, Congo Free State, 1890. The original illustration was by E.W. Kemble for an article called "The Slave-Trade in the Congo Basin" and appeared in the April 1890 *Century* magazine. Slaves were lucky if their black owners did not eat them or use them in ritual sacrifice. (2) Black slaves on a transatlantic slave ship are shown getting some fresh air. Slavers naturally wanted to deliver their product alive and healthy if only for reasons of maximum profit. (3) Back in Africa, one method of yoking a slave is shown. This mechanism kept the slave safely at well over arm's length. Except for the weapons, it would be hard to tell the slavers from the slaves. Facing page: propaganda picture of slaves thanking Abraham Lincoln for their presumed emancipation.

Lott gets to the root of the problem by utilizing a quote from a Mr. Bliss, found in the *Congressional Globe* archives:

> In Africa, the natives sell their own race as slaves. They sell to each other as they sold to the white man. Thus it was the ancestors of those now held in bondage [slavery] on this continent brought from Africa with them the condition of [being] property.

In *The Truth About American Slavery* Lott revisits themes that are common in his previous works (such as slavery was protected by the central government, the U.S. Constitution, the Supreme Court and under the U.S. flag).

What makes this particular work by Lott unique is the fact that he devotes entire chapters of quotes from the *Congressional Globe* archives to back up his research. Take quote No. 6 (found on page 43) for instance, which states:

> Could anything be more explicit than the assertion of the right to protection of property everywhere, wherever the [U.S. flag] floats or the federal government has jurisdiction ... upon the land and upon the sea it is the duty of the federal government in all its departments to protect property of every species, slaves as well as other property.

Yet another chapter of *Congressional Globe* quotes is dedicated to proving that Washington, D.C., our nation's
capital, was in fact a slave capital in which slavery was not only accepted but flourished. Quote No. 10 in this chapter (85) provides an excellent example:

The maintenance of slavery in the Federal District [Washington, D.C.], by the authority of the United States, exerts a conservative influence over the institution [slavery] in the states, by clothing it with the countenance and sanction of the nation. The District of Columbia is thus made the citadel of American slavery, its munitions of defense or as the late Mr. Calhoun once said, the very key of slavery.

Also included are 19 entire pages of Congressional Globe quotes that provide proof of how the U.S. government depended upon the taxation of slaves for its revenue. This can be found in quote No. 22 (found on page 102), which reads: “Resolved that a tax or duty of $10 per head be imposed upon all slaves hereafter imported into any of the United States.”

An entire chapter of Congressional Globe quotes is devoted to proving that the so-called Civil War was a war caused by economic issues, not morality issues. The federal government had much to lose in the form of revenue collected from the taxation of slaves if the South were allowed to claim its independence. Another cause of the war was recently enacted tariffs against Southern ports by the federal government.

As Lott writes on page 113, just one month prior to the hostilities that erupted at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, the Morrill Tariff was enacted, increasing the price of imported goods by 47%.

Lott dedicates 14 pages of congressional quotes that prove the “Civil War” was about economics. An excellent example of this is found on page 121:

Let me beg the party who are soon to take charge of this government [Republican Party, led by Abraham Lincoln] to let the seceded states [Southern states] alone, and by no means to attempt to collect revenue [taxes or tariffs] in their ports. That would result in a bloody, terrible war. But on the contrary, acknowledge the independence of the Confederate States of America, and treat them as an ally and friendly nation.

But, as we all know, Lincoln did not let the South go in peace. He did not treat the Confederate States of America as a friend or an ally. In fact Lincoln’s U.S. government would stop at nothing to ensure that the flow of revenue continued to flow from the South to Washington, D.C. In Chapter 8 (159), Mr. Lott writes:

The United States Army was the first army to break the rules of civilized warfare. War crimes . . . happened to Southerners during the Civil War. Southerners had their farms and plantations burned to the ground; their land was taken illegally; and Southern women (both black and white) were raped during the Civil War.

In a time when so many race-hustling politicians and organizations are calling for apologies and reparations for slavery, so that our nation might be “healed,” Stanley Lott (on page 162) reminds us of another group of people that have been forgotten by the public and ignored by the media that deserve an apology: “War crimes that were committed against regular, common, Southern people during the Civil War [need] to be brought out and dealt with. A true healing process needs to happen. Southerners of all races need to get some form of reparations and an official apology from the United States government.”

The Truth About American Slavery is an excellent tool that should be purchased and utilized by all Southerners who are concerned about recent attacks on their heritage and the distortion of our symbols by the media.

Copies should be purchased and given to friends, family, local libraries and schools. As Lott writes in his “Final Thoughts” (177): “After reading about this . . . who could keep on saying that the Confederate battle flag and other Confederate symbols are symbols of slavery?”

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**
- Good, Jim, The Redneck Manifesto: How Hillbillies, Hicks, and White Trash Became America’s Scapegoats.
- Hoffman, Michael A., They Were White and They Were Slaves: The Untold History of the Enslavement of Whites in Early America.

**ENDNOTE:**
1 The Congressional Globe or Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73).