

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Sixty-Three

Slavery — Old and New

LESSON IDEA

To illustrate, as we begin a series of lessons on the War Between the States, that slavery was — and is — common throughout the world; and that Americans today should feel no special guilt because of conditions that existed in this country more than one hundred years ago.

PREPARATION

Read "During The Week" and be familiar enough with the material in the books mentioned to give your family some idea of the nature and extent of the Communist slave labor system. And, if possible, consult some current periodicals for information on the size of the executive branch of the federal government, as well as the scope and power of some of its agencies.

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ON A MILD October day in 1492 the first black man to enter the Western Hemisphere set foot on an island in the West Indies. He was with the crew of Columbus — and a slave. The natives on the island gazed in wonder — not because they were shocked that Columbus had slaves, but because they had never seen a white man before. Or a black man, for that matter. But one thing that probably did *not* surprise them was the existence of slaves. Enslaving a defeated enemy was as common at that time in the New World as it had been in the Old. In fact, the institution of slavery is older than recorded history and at various times has held black, white, yellow, and red men in its grip.

So there was nothing unique about slavery in America — expect for the idea today that Americans, especially white Americans, should feel guilty about slavery in the United States during the

first one hundred years of our existence. The opinion molders, politicians, and teachers who peddle this idea seem confident that no one will know enough history to dispute their charges. But before any of us are persuaded to carry heavy stones of guilt in our pockets for a condition that existed in this country more than one hundred years ago, let's consult some history lessons on this very delicate subject.

And first let's turn to our Bibles for an account of slavery many thousands of years ago. Do you remember the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, with the coat of many colors? Do you recall what his brothers did to him because of their jealousy and hatred? [*If this story is not familiar to your family, read Chapter 37 of Genesis aloud. If someone does know the story, have him tell it to the others.*] Yes, Joseph's brothers hated him so much that they sold him as a slave, for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph, of course, was not a black man; nor were his sellers or his new masters.

The Bible tells many stories of slavery. It was common practice in ancient times for the victors of war to make slaves of those whom they defeated, regardless of race or creed. Remember the slave markets of Rome, and the stories of galleys manned and powered by slaves in leg irons?

Did you know that the first Negroes from Africa were sold in Europe five hundred years before Columbus came to the New World? Or that long before the first English colony was established in America, thousands of Negro slaves were owned by wealthy families in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies? That King Philip of Spain and Queen

Anne of England both owned stock in a company formed to buy Negroes in Africa and sell them in the Spanish, Portuguese, and English colonies? And that today there are more slaves in the world than ever before?

Do you know which countries maintain slave systems? [*Discuss the slave labor camps of the Soviet Union and of Red China. The Gulag Archipelago by exiled author Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn names and describes the Soviet camps. How and why this slavery system is maintained would make a good research project for preteens or teenagers in the family.*]

Not even the wildest charges about slavery in America two centuries ago can possibly compare with the truth about the physical and mental sadism now being practiced on millions of men, women, and children in Communist countries. We certainly do not mean to excuse slavery, in any form or at any time in history, but we do want to make this point: There is no reason for Americans today to develop a guilt complex about the plantation labor system of the 1800's.

DURING THE DEBATE on independence and again at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, there were strong arguments against slavery. George Mason, a southern patriot, made a long speech on the subject in which he said: "Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They bring the judgment of heaven upon a country."

James Madison, another southern statesman, declared he "thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men." Similar voices of protest were raised in both the North and the South during the State conventions called to ratify the Constitution. But many men in the North realized that their southern neighbors depended upon a plantation system of agriculture that demanded enormous manpower, and that there were not enough free men for hire.

George Washington, for example, complained that he was forced to buy laborers for his fields although he would have preferred to hire free men. Was this merely a landowner's excuse? [*Explain that Washington's service during the Revolutionary War would hardly have been possible if he had not*

had laborers working his fields during his absence. From these fields came the resources he needed for supplies, food, and clothing during his six long years of service. The Continental Congress was using every penny it could get to equip and pay the soldiers under Washington's command. The fact that the Commander-in-Chief volunteered to serve without pay and to finance his own expenses until Congress found the funds to reimburse him was an enormous help to the poverty-pressed government of the new nation.]

Washington's personal feelings about slavery were clearly revealed in his last will and testament. He wrote:

Upon the decease of my wife it is my will and desire that all the slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom. — And whereas among those who will receive freedom, there may be some, who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, will be unable to support themselves; it is my will and desire that — they shall be comfortably clothed and fed by my heirs while they live. — And I do hereby expressly forbid the sale or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any slave I may die possessed of, under any pretense whatsoever.

What does Washington's concern for the aged and the young tell us about his character? Do the alleged civil rights crusaders of our day show any of Washington's compassion? [*Discuss some of the consequences of civil rights demonstrations of the 1960's and the violence that has resulted. Mention the harm that has been done by riots, agitation, bussing children in and out of cities, and more — all for the grand cause of racial equality.*]

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

We strongly urge you to read *The Gulag Archipelago* by exiled author Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, because no discussion of slavery can be complete without an understanding of the Soviet system as it operates today. Solzhenitsyn was himself a slave for many years — as were millions of others, some of whom died, some of whom were released broken in body and mind, and some of whom are still in bondage. The story of these individuals and of the political regime that specializes in terror to gain obedience is unforgettable.

HAD THE United States remained within its thirteen-colony area, slavery might never have become an issue between the North and the South. Cotton, the main crop of the plantations, was wearing out land rapidly. The planters might have been forced to find a new means of making a living had they been confined to the land boundaries of the 1700's. But America was moving westward, and the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 opened up an entire new world of fresh, rich farmland in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Naturally, when southern planters moved across the Mississippi River, they took their slaves with them.

In *Quest Of A Hemisphere*, historian Donzella Cross Boyle summarizes the events of the 1800's in these words:

"This westward migration brought the slavery question to a crisis point. The northerners did not want slavery to spread into the western lands. The southerners felt entitled to take their slaves with them when they moved west. Each side was anxious that its representatives in Congress not be outnumbered. If this happened, then Congress would be able to pass laws that favored one group over another. Some plan had to be found for admitting the new states to the Union.

"When Missouri had enough settlers for a state, the people voted on a constitution, sent it to Congress, and asked admission to the Union. When the clause providing for slavery was read in Congress, it brought forth heated debates in both houses. If Missouri became a slave state, would slavery spread over the entire Louisiana Purchase? Henry Clay [the Senator from Kentucky] and his committee came forward with a compromise which both sides accepted. The famous Missouri Compromise of 1820 provided that Missouri would be admitted to the Union as a slave state, but that all other territory in the Louisiana Purchase, lying north of the southern boundary of Missouri, should be forever free. The South gained another slave state. At the same time Maine was admitted as a free state. For the time being this kept both slave and free states equally represented in the Senate.

"When the United States gained more western territory at the end of the Mexican War, the slavery feud broke out again with renewed fury. The same question — slave or free — was debated in Congress

when California applied for admission to the Union

"Daniel Webster, a Senator from Massachusetts, tried to convince his fellow members of the Senate that nature had turned the scale against slavery in the territory acquired from Mexico. In a speech he described the country to prove this point:

"California and New Mexico are composed of vast ridges of mountains of enormous height, with broken ridges and deep valleys. The sides of these mountains are barren; their tops capped with snow. — What is there in New Mexico that could induce any body to go there with slaves? . . . And who expects to see a hundred black men cultivating tobacco, corn, cotton, rice, or anything else on lands in New Mexico? I look upon it, therefore, — that both California and New Mexico are destined to be free; — free by the arrangement of things by the Power above us.' "

WEBSTER'S POINT was well taken; these new lands were not suited to plantation farming. But it was not geography or slavery that bothered many; it was the right of the federal government to dictate to Americans what they could or could not do. In our early years as a nation, the federal government had not dared to tell any state what it could or could not do, nor to dictate to any citizen how he should manage his property. It had not pretended to be the granter of rights or the judge of morals, but merely the protector of rights which already existed. The voices of protest that were raised against slavery in those early years used moral arguments, not the threat of armed force. Now, it seemed to many that the federal government was overstepping its Constitutional boundaries and becoming dictatorial.

John C. Calhoun, the Senator from South Carolina, emphasized precisely this point when he said to Congress:

That this government claims, and practically maintains the right to decide in the last resort, as to the extent of its powers, will scarcely be denied by anyone That it also claims the right to resort to force, to maintain whatever power [it] claims against all opposition. Now, I ask, what limitation can possibly be placed upon the powers of a

government, claiming and exercising such rights? And, if none can be, how can the separate government of the States maintain and protect the powers reserved to them by the Constitution, or the people of the several States maintain those which are reserved to them . . . ?

What has happened since Calhoun's time to the rights and sovereignty of the states? Has the federal government enlarged its powers at the expense of the states? Has this produced more freedom or less for individuals? [As one example, discuss the number of people employed by the federal government today as compared with 1850, and the power of some of the regulatory agencies and bureaus — such as OSHA.]

The dilemma of 1850 was caused in part because the federal government was not dealing with established states in the West, but with new territories. It was a situation which was not clearly defined in the Constitution, and for which lawmakers and statesmen had to make new decisions. On the question of California and New Mexico, the Congress of 1850 made another compromise: California was admitted as a free state; New Mexico and Utah were organized as territories with permission to enter the Union as slave or free states according to the vote of their people; a fugitive slave law was passed permitting runaway slaves to be captured in any state or territory of the Union and returned to their masters; and the slave trade was abolished in the District of Columbia.

It was thought that popular sovereignty — which meant letting the people of the new territory decide by majority vote whether to enter the Union as a free or a slave state — was a workable and fair solution to the problem; and in 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act provided popular sovereignty for these two territories, even though the Missouri Compromise of 1820 had forbidden slavery in lands so far north. But territorial war was the result, as emigration societies rushed free men into Kansas to increase their numbers, and slaveholders from the neighboring state of Missouri crossed the border in larger bands to support their beliefs. Two governments were set up, one slave and one free. This led to such violent fighting that the territory became known as "Bleeding Kansas," and popular sovereignty, instead of a promising solution, be-

came a meaningless slogan. As emotions grew more heated, the threat that the southern states would break away from the Union increased daily.

Concluding Thought

Few historical events are more emotion-laden than the War Between the States, which began in 1861. Few, if any, events in our history have so influenced the thoughts and traditions of so many of our citizens. But what we must remember as we study this period is that slavery, while not morally consistent with the principles of freedom on which our nation was founded, was nevertheless an ancient practice for which we today bear no guilt. And it is especially hypocritical of those who are so friendly to the slave-holding nations of the 1970's to insist that we should feel guilty about events and issues of one hundred years ago. However, slavery was the issue that divided the nation in the mid-1800's and ultimately tipped the scales of power in favor of the federal government at the expense of the states and individual citizens. How this came about we will see in later lessons, as we study the War and its effects.

DURING THE WEEK

The effort to infect Americans with a guilt complex about slavery has been so enormous in the past few years that it would seem worthwhile to put this subject in proper perspective by studying the sophisticated slavery systems of today's Communist empire. If you are already familiar with the techniques and methods described by those who have lived behind the Iron Curtain, discuss them with your family. If not, you can easily become familiar with this system of slavery by reading any one of the following: *The Gulag Archipelago*, by Solzhenitsyn (\$1.95), *I Was A Slave In Russia*, by Noble (\$1.50), *The Pastor's Wife*, by Wurmbrand (\$6.00), or the booklet *What Is Communism?* by Robert Welch (25¢). All are available from most American Opinion Bookstores, or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

The Family Heritage Series

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