

exception of the third chapter – this book is mostly about enslaved men. Schermerhorn also includes a helpful essay on secondary sources which is full of valuable recent literature. But there is no conventional bibliography and such an addition would have been extremely helpful in checking sources.

These minor gripes aside, Schermerhorn has written a fascinating, provocative book which does not shy away from asking big questions about the development of the early nineteenth-century United States and of modern capitalism more generally.

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### **Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War**

MARC EGNAL

New York: Hill and Wang, 2009

Pp. 416, \$16.00 (pbk), ISBN 978 0 8090 1645 7

In 1913, the historian James Ford Rhodes declared that “of the American Civil War it may safely be asserted that there was a single cause: slavery.” Rhodes was hardly the first to make this claim, as Marc Egnal himself observes, “who can disagree with Lincoln’s statement that ‘all knew’ slavery, somehow, ‘was the cause of the war?’” (p. 286). Assuming Rhodes’s, Lincoln’s, and Egnal’s diagnosis is correct, one is compelled to ask why the quantity of studies on the American Civil War’s origins rival the number of those on the causes of the First World War. Attempts to explain the origins of the latter have cost of gallons of ink and acreage of trees and still there is nothing like a scholarly consensus. By contrast, as the opinions of the triumvirate above demonstrate, that slavery caused the American Civil War was, and remains, the most generally accepted view. Thus, contrary to Egnal’s claim that historians cannot “agree on the general outlines of an interpretation” there is in fact broad agreement (p. 3). Not only that, despite his declaration that “the current emphasis on slavery as a cause of the Civil War is fraught with problems,” Egnal’s study actually confirms the central role slavery played in the origins of the conflict (p. 5). Insofar as Egnal is blazoning a new path, he casts the divisions caused by slavery in economic, rather than moral, terms. This is not, as he acknowledges, an entirely original approach, being at least in part an updating of Charles and Mary Beard’s economic interpretation, but it is certainly far more nuanced and sophisticated than previous versions.

Egnal persuasively argues that the rise of the Great Lakes region from the 1830s onward reoriented the American economy and in so doing laid the foundation for sectional discord. The rise of the Great Lakes’ economy, however, resulted in an East/West economy overshadowing and superseding the older North/South model. To an extent, this meant a loosening, if not decoupling, of the southern and northern (now New England and the Great Lakes) economies. The former close ties between northern manufacturers and southern planters being steadily weakened. As went the economic separation, so went the political; there was now less reason or

encouragement for sectional compromise. Eventually the political parties themselves would break down along sectional lines, giving rise to the Republican Party and Lincoln.

Of and by itself, Egnal's idea is persuasive as *one* of the factors underlying sectional discord (and the development of the Great Lakes region ensured that the North would be far stronger economically come the conflict). Yet as his own work demonstrates, the centrality of slavery to the economy of the Deep South, and the "insatiable need of slave agriculture for new land" resulted in political clashes over the extension of the institution into new territory (p. 159). More importantly, Egnal's demarcation lines separating the economic, political, and moral reasons for opposition towards slavery are often blurred—something perhaps inevitable given that the institution's opponents often themselves utilized a combination of reasons. There was nothing uniquely American about this: Adam Smith, for example, opposed slavery on both economic and moral grounds (and thus on political grounds, too).

Moreover, there were clearly other factors besides economics at play in antebellum America's political and cultural development. Why was it that as late as 1839, John Quincy Adams could urge, apparently without fear of contradiction, that should the states become alienated from each other, it would be better "to part in friendship" than "be held together by constraint," and yet just twenty-two years later, the United States was prepared to expend the lives of more than 620,000 men precisely to ensure the latter? When it comes to the origins of the American Civil War, economics is only part of the answer.

If this reviewer is reluctant to accept Egnal's thesis in its entirety, let him at least declare that this is an intelligent, well-written, and deeply researched (there are some fifty pages of notes in tiny font) examination of the origins of the conflict. Given the precipitous decline in economic history, a work illustrating the centrality of economics to historical (and, for that matter, present-day) events is surely something to celebrate. Even if Egnal's work does not entirely upset the extant scholarly consensus regarding the causes of the American Civil War, it examines it from a fresh approach, replacing pat answers with interesting questions. It deserves a wide audience.

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### **Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina**

JUDKIN BROWNING

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011

Pp. 250, \$37.50 (hbk), ISBN 978 0 8078 3468 8

A book detailing the complex nature of loyalty, particularly in an area of military occupation, and the way in which loyalty can shift in concert with the tide of war, perhaps could not have come at a more relevant time. Not only are the public and