

Gasdaly Perez
History 17A (9:30-11:00)
Research Paper
03-27-06

Different Views

“You speak of excitement and commotion but I think you need have no fears from the north we do wish to interfere with you on slavery I had rather work myself than have slaves...but if you at the south feel approved of God to have slaves than all is well.”¹

America is a nation that has experienced a lot of change. Changes caused by social movements and political influences that have shaped this nation. In 1859, America was on the brink of its most crucial and devastating change of its short national history. Anti-slavery movements and changes in political powers that led to the American Civil War.

The views of slavery differed between the North and South States and among family members depending of the region of the United States that they lived in. Due to the issue of slavery, The United States as a whole divided into two nations, The North and The South. In Lydia Hotchkiss’ letter to her son, Jedediah Hotchkiss, she mentions North views of slavery and South fear of the North. The North, when Lydia Hotchkiss wrote her letter to her son, wanted to abolish slavery. Northern church views regarding slavery were different from church views of the South. The Northern States during this time of period had growing industries and factories spreading through out Northern States. The Southern States, on the opposite, had growing plantations that require the labor of slaves.² Northern states believed in free labor, meaning a person would be able to choose where to work.

¹ <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nybroome/brhotch1.htm>

The North wanted to abolish slavery by making all states free of slaves. They formed different anti-slavery groups. One of these groups was the Anti-Slavery Society that was established in New York, 1832.³ By this time, Lydia Hotchkiss lived in Windsor, New York. She was 31 years of age and lived with husband and first borne son, Jedediah Hotchkiss of 2 years of age.⁴ These types of anti-slavery groups could have influenced her to believe that slavery was wrong.

In her letter she says, “You speak of excitement and commotion...” When she wrote this letter in Dec. 18, 1859, one of the commotions going on during this period was the Election of 1860. Abraham Lincoln was a candidate for the presidency of the United States. Finally, Abraham Lincoln won the election and became president of the Unites States in 1860. President Abraham Lincoln opposed the expansion of slavery and believes that slavery was wrong.⁵ This was a threat to the South.

Another excitement that Lydia Hotchkiss could be referring to was the abolitionist movement led by John Brown. John Brown was an abolitionist that wanted to attack slavery in the South. He led a group of men to set an attack in Virginia, a slave state, in which he did not succeed.⁶ Lydia’s son, Jedediah Hotchkiss, lived in Virginia at the time of the attack. Abolitionist groups were taking place because they wanted full emancipation of slavery. Others abolitionist groups were religious groups.

According to Lydia Hotchkiss in her letter she writes, “I wish you to have the smiles and approbation of a holy God who does all things right and to whom we must all stand or fall for ourselves.” According to her statement, another way in which the two

² <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcivilwar.htm>

³ Nation of Nations - A Concise Narrative of the American Republic

⁴ <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nybroome/brhotch1.htm>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln_on_slavery

nations divided was on their views of slavery but through God's eyes. One of the religious groups was the Quakers. The Quakers were reformers who sought equality and care for all of mankind regardless of their race; peace and social justice for all regardless of class or economic situation.⁷

The influenced of the church views provided fuel to get the movement going and controlling the drive was the industrial revolution that spurred new ways of manufacturing products in which will require free labor.

The Northerners believe in free labor. In the year of 1859 when Lydia Hotchkiss wrote her letter, the North States were going through an Industrial Revolution. The Northern industries were growing and spreading quickly. This meant that they needed more people to work in their factories. Industrialists believed that, if freed, slaves would move North to seek new way of life which included new job opportunities.⁸ Anti-slavery men believed that if slaves would move north, they would have the advancement in their life. Slaves would have the ability and freedom to learn new skills and move from job to job depending on the demands of market. All this changes, belief and movements going on through out the Northern countries, threaten the Southern way of life.

Lydia writes to her son "you need have no fears from the North." Lydia Hotchkiss is explaining to her son that Northerners do not wish to interfere with their slaves. When in fact the North changes affected the Southerners life. Southern States views of slavery were contrary to the North. Southern States agricultural economic depended on the work of slaves. Southern churches interpreter the bible writings differently to defend their cause of owning slaves.

⁶ Nations of Nations (page 411)

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quakers>

In 1858, Abraham Lincoln made a speech that pertained to the issue of slavery. This speech caused The South to fear the North. “We have in this nation the element of domestic slavery. The Republican Party think it wrong - we think it is a moral, a social, and a political wrong. We think it is wrong not confining itself merely to the persons of the States where it exists, but that it is a wrong which in its tendency, to say the least, affects the existence of the whole nation. Because we think it wrong, we propose a course of policy that shall deal with it as a wrong. We deal with it as with any other wrong, insofar as we can prevent it growing any larger, and so deal with it that in the run of time there may be some promise of an end to it.”⁹

The South felt that the proposed ending of slavery would also end their way of life. They would be economically ruined because the plantations, the crops and slaves were almost everything they had. “The South produced only 9 % of the nation’s manufactured goods.” “84 percent of its labor force engaged in agriculture in 1860, compared with 40 percent supply of cotton.”¹⁰ The production of these crops was very labor intensive. The slaves performed this labor. . In his speech, Abraham Lincoln was stating that slavery must end. The south saw their society, their livelihoods being attacked. The South was economically dependent on export crops like cotton and tobacco. “By 1840 the south produced more than sixty percent of the world’s supply and cotton accounted for almost two-thirds of all American exports”¹¹ And by “1860 the U.S. produced three-fourths of the world’s in the North.”¹² Without the slaves the crops would not be taken care of, the loss of crops meant a serious loss of money. The South’s way of

⁸ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcivilwar.htm>

⁹ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcivilwar.htm>

¹⁰ Nation of Nations (page 339)

¹¹ Nation of Nations (page 255)

life as they saw was being attacked unjustly because they believed that their way of life was the way God wanted it to be.

Lydia Hotchkiss continues in her letter by writing, “But if you at the South feel approved of God to have slaves then all is well. I wish you to have the smiles and approbation of a holy God who does all things right and to whom we must all stand or fall for ourselves.”¹³ This statement reflected the ideas the South had about slavery and religion. At the time, the south felt that they were put on this Earth to watch over inferior races. They felt that they were supposed to find labor for the African slaves and that by doing so they were doing God’s will and work. Preacher, at the time, passes on the words of God to the plantation owners with their interpretations. Preacher Stephen Elliot’s sermon providing a tribute to the Confederate soldiers of the Civil War justifies the fighting by saying, “We do not place our cause upon the highest level until we grasp the idea that God has made us the guardians and champions of a people whom he is preparing for his own purposes, and against whom the whole world is banded. The most solemn relation upon earth is that between parent and child, because in it immortal souls are committed to the training of man not only for time but for eternity. There is no measure to its sublimity, for it stretches upwards to the throne of God and links us with immortality. We tremble when we meditate upon it and cry for Divine help when we weigh its responsibilities. What shall we think, then, of the relation which subsists between a dominant race, professing to believe in God and to acknowledge Christ, and a subject race, brought from their distant homes and placed under its charge for culture, for elevation, and for salvation, and while so placed contributing by its labor to the welfare

¹² Nation of Nations (page 340)

¹³ <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nybroome/brhotch1.htm>

and comfort of the world. What a trust from God! What reliance has he placed upon our faithfulness and our integrity! What a sure confidence does it give us in his protection and favor! His divine arrangements are placed in our keeping. Will he not preserve them? His divine purposes seem to be intermingled with our success.”¹⁴ While the interpretations of what God wanted for human kind can be seen one way, many Southerners believed that slaves might interpret differently. The plantation owners believe that the slaves would interpret the teachings of the bible as reasons why everyone should be treated equally.¹⁵ This belief led many owners to prohibit slaves from learning to read and going to church.

To conclude, Lydia Hotchkiss’ letter to her son was an example of views of two Nations going through changes. Both Nations experienced the effects of social movements and political influences. The economic systems were based on free labor in the North and on slave labor in the South. Religion and slavery was a disputed issue between both nations and each interpret the words of the God defiantly. Slavery contraries and aspects were issues that led the two Nations into the historical American Civil War.

¹⁴ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcivilwar.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcivilwar.htm>