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Religion and the Civil War in America

Les fonctions sociales de la religion dans la société américaine sont examinées par l'auteur de manière comparative: au travers de la période des origines et de la formation de la société américaine d'une part et au travers de la période de la guerre civile qui déchira cette société d'autre part. Pour l'auteur, le rôle de la religion au cours de la guerre civile ne fut pas comparable à ce qu'il avait été aux origines de la société américaine, même si elle intervint dans le champ politique comme support à l'établissement du nouvel ordre économique. Elle apporta son soutien à la mise en place d'une démocratie économique abolissant l'esclavage, tout en acceptant que les relations sociales entre Blancs et Noirs démentent les idéaux constitutionnels de l'égalité entre tous. L'assassinat du Pasteur Martin Luther King à la moitié du 20 ème siècle viendra scander dramatiquement cette faille originelle.

> Now tell us all about the war and what they faught each other for . . . what they faught each other for, I could not well make out (Robert Southey, The Battle of Blenheim).

Introduction

The Civil War in America has occasioned a large number of interpretations from different points of view.[1] Two significant views even came from contemporaries in England: John Bright, the Manchester liberal and Karl Marx, an exile in London.[2] It has also become the "most historical subject" in American history writing. It made legendary the Gettysburg address of Abraham Lincoln: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any other so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." In consonance John Russel Bartlett wrote, in 1866, his book on the literature of the rebellion and not of the war. The two major issues bound inevitably with each other were the national union and slavery.

The source materials would well nigh daze anyone. The president of the Southern Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, sat back after the defeat to write his memoirs of massive apologia for the South, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*. He probably inaugurated the Southern viewpoint of the war (Barker, 1977: 135-52), which might have contrasted with the

Northern viewpoint (Barker, 1977: 113–34). In their wake many viewpoints have been written, copiously documented and, in some way, substitute for the memory of cultural–historical monuments a country of America's geographical size and colonial origin lacks (Barker, 1977: 3–4). This type of history writing has established a number of stereotypes with shifting emphases, so that even today one cannot easily make out what they really fought each other for (Burke, 1980).

A Totality Approach

In enquiring into the causes of a war, in writing the history of these causes one has to "assume . . . that there is a certain pattern of cause and effect in history", but "it is a mistake to think that increased knowledge necessarily brings increased understanding" (Barker, 1977: 11–12). War crises have often existed without a war resulting and, hence, a study of the pre-war years will give only a limited view of a crisis having occurred. One needs to situate the civil war in America within the totality of the origins and formation, as well as the structure, of American society.

The pattern of cause and effect can be discussed from the point of view of the individual: "Despite deeper causes individual men took decisions which brought war" (Barker, 1977: 98). Such a viewpoint would emphasize the concern "with individual responsibility in the affairs of men" (Barker, 1977: 9). But it could also be discussed in another way without being in any manner positivistic or deterministic: "Forces beyond the control of men had much to do with making the conflict inevitable" (Barker, 1977: 14). A combination of these viewpoints, a kind of Weber–Marx synthesis[3] of the origin and formation as well as the structure of a society, treating it as a totality, could give us an insight into determining some of the major causes of the war in the formation of American society.

The Post-Civil War Society

From a general standpoint, history is written from the point of view of the history writer and the contemporary society the writer lives in,[4] and we could ask what happened to the issues idealized as worth fighting an embittered civil war for!

Economically, the Civil War "modernized the plants of the industrialists and lined their pockets with profits which could be used for further expansion" (Baldwin, 1960: 390–1). This secured, after the First and Second World Wars, the foundation of an economic boom and domination, and America emerged as one of the great economic giants organizing a corresponding hegemony of expanding economic and political control, not necessarily committed to democratic and egalitarian processes. The technical and scientific forces of production, entrepreneurship, and the phenomenon of 'foundations' took shape after the Civil War. Stock exchange and finance capitalism also began to establish their hold after the Civil War. In the period

before and during the war, though independent politically, America was dependent on Europe for its agricultural and manufacturing exports, financial investment, immigrants' remittances and interest on borrowings as well as raw-material exports. Europe maintained a strong hold over its finances and investment, possibly till the First World War (Baldwin, 1960: 396). Mechanization of agriculture, steel production, railways, industries and finance houses developed the North and the Northwest in such a way that a hegemony of the North was established over the Southern states where there was limited industrial growth and investment.[5]

On the whole, "apart from the material devastation the whole basis of Southern economic life had been disrupted. . . . Unfortunately, Northern capitalists were unscrupulous in their search for industrial opportunities in the prostrate South" (Barker, 1977: 153–4).

The South made a compromise with the emancipated slaves in building up a system of share-cropping tenancies, the advantages of which brought little solace to the slaves and instead increased their misery. The form of social control over them changed but the material realities kept them in a state of utter suppression and poverty. Social, cultural and religious relations between the Whites and the Blacks did not improve in any way.

In the period of the so-called "Reconstruction" the sectional interests aligned themselves such that the republican–democratic polarization took on definite shape, and the present democracy took its form and direction. The Union continued "whatever the individual states may have said and done" (Barker, 1977: 155). President Lincoln announced his plan of reconstruction in 1863, demanding that citizens take the oath of loyalty and decide at a state convention against secession and slavery. "His plan did not ask for any positive action towards the Negro beyond emancipation" (Barker, 1977: 155). The radical republicans decided to agitate for the radical politics of Negro franchise, at least for the literate Negroes but, in fact, the Congress passed "special laws known as the 'Black Codes' for the control of the former slaves. . . . They were to make a long-term contract with an employer on pain of being arrested for vagrancy . . ." (Barker, 1977: 157). Other political reforms were seen through: the federal government greatly increased its power,[6] the democratic base was established in the South, the South came to be considered a conquered territory and the so-called "carpet-baggers" held total sway! The South reacted by giving rise to the notorious Ku Klux Klan in 1867 and pursued a brutal racialist fight against the Blacks and repressed them:

> The outcome of the civil war was to free the slave but the outcome of Reconstruction was in the long run to confirm the tradition of white supremacy over the black race. . . . Within twenty years segregation of the races was made almost universal throughout the South and a series of "Jim Crow" laws marked the triumph of a narrow racial policy which had little to do with the experiences of Civil War and Reconstruction (Barker, 1977: 162–3).

The churches both of the North and the South — or, American Christian religion — considered the Civil War as "primarily a moral and religious

struggle" (Sweet, 1950: 327–9). In their contribution to the Reconstruction they stood behind Congress. "If Congress fails we fail; if Congress succeeds we succeed" was their common chorus. There was a general enthusiasm to try to educate the Blacks through schools. "The condition of our coloured population appeals strongly to the sympathy of every Christian heart, and demands at the hands of all who love the Saviour, renewed exertions for their moral and religious improvement", the Baptist Convention in Alabama said in 1865. However, the Negro education took place through catechism and Sunday schools! It gave, in practice, a "Negro" identity to the Blacks in their churches. Their segregation-discrimination and paternal care, through charitable help, left the economic base undisturbed.

In the period of slavery the total social, familial and personal life of the Negroes was systematically destroyed and their identity was, in some cases, given a dominated Christian meaning: the servant of the white race destined by God to be such by his curse of Ham, the son of Noah! In many instances conversion was denied them in the hope of having no duty towards them. In the wake of this, to alleviate their suffering, to maintain and to prolong their hope, the Blacks found a "biblical" basis, especially in the Exodus theme of liberation (the passage to the promised land, the crossing of the river Jordan to freedom from suffering and misery), and it was kept alive by secret meetings and "spirituals".[7] In the period of Reconstruction this led to a critique of Christian religion and a search for Black identity and Black power. Du Bois (1935) and others looked at their history "in a Black way". In the 1950s the movement for civil rights for the Blacks, and in the 1960s the gathering civil rights tempo, spearheaded by the non-violence approach of Martin Luther King Jr, expressed the true Black concern for their emancipation almost a century after the abolition of Black slavery! Their non-violent creed met with violence at the hands of the dominant white society and Martin Luther King Jr was murdered. The Black Panther and Black Consciousness movements arose and reached new heights, giving them a political identity. Later, in the 1970s, it gained religious and theological expression especially in the form of systematic religious discourse called Black Theology (Kamphausen, 1982).

Du Bois contends that the Blacks were not given a fair chance. Most Northerners had not fought the war to end slavery at all and the idealists among the radical Republicans were too few in number to control the selfish and material interests of the North (Barker, 1977: 163–4). A stereotype of the Negro as ignorant, lazy, dishonest, extravagant and irresponsible, but responsible for bad government in the South, was the manifest expression which legitimized the general and deep-rooted racial domination.

Religion and the Origins of American Society

Marx blamed the causes of the Civil War on slavery representing the economic and political interests of the South.[8] Barrington Moore Jr called it the last capitalist revolution and said: "Striking down slavery was a decisive

step, an act at least as important as the striking down of absolute monarchy in the English Civil War and the French Revolution, an essential preliminary for further advances. Like these violent upheavals, the main achievements in our Civil War were political in the broad sense of the term. Later generations in America were to attempt to put economic content into the political framework . . ." (Moore, 1981: 153).

Religion as an Analytical Category

In Marx and Moore there is an implicit refusal to consider religion as an analytical category in understanding the causes of the Civil War in America.[9] The post-Enlightenment and the Modern-Liberal trend represented by these authors is sufficiently counterbalanced by the works of Max Weber, who considered religion a key to the understanding of the origins of capitalism and found its social functions relevant to explain the behaviour of successful capitalists who emerged out of Christian sects (Weber, 1980). The function of Black Theology also as the rejuvenation of studies on religion as a function of "development" in non-industrialized countries (Houtart, 1980, 1981; Houtart-Lemercinier, 1981) has put the power of the concept of religion as an analytical category back into scientific studies.

Religion and American Origins

Before the capitalist societies were able to produce their own economic and political, as well as scientific-technological, theories and ideologies (with their philosophical variants) religion was the general and dominant mediator of the relations and forces of production, social organization, world-view and ethical values (Houtart, 1974). Christian religion as Eurochristian tradition dominated the economic and political realms of feudal Europe. In the periods of Renaissance, Discoveries and Reformation the medieval Christian consensus gave way to new political and social (and ideological) alliances of new economic forces and relations, helped by conquest, colonization and foreign trade (Herring, 1964: 117-27).

Religion, Conquest and Colony

The new world of the Americas can only be studied on the canvas of the Old World, that of Latin and Nordic Europe. The general resurgence of nations and monarchies had put the medieval "one church, one empire" concept in jeopardy. The Reformations were only the last blow in a series of structural changes that overran Europe. The Islamic hegemony of the Mediterranean and West Asian regions gradually eroded and found competition among the "discoverers" of new sea routes to their trading depots. Portuguese and Spanish rivalry in search of Indian and Eastern spices, goods and gold took Christopher Columbus to the Caribbean in 1492, and started the Mexican adventure of Cortes in search of gold and silver! Middle America was

conquered and colonized. This led to the expansion of trade and plantations of sugar and tobacco (Herring, 1964: 127–34).

Most of the territory occupied by the colonial Old World was inhabited by people of different clans, tribes and kingdoms in a variety of social formations. The only possibility of conquest was provided by the Eurochristian variety of religious discourse: the right of Christians to conquer the heathens and the infidels, confiscate their property and take them into slavery. A people without the knowledge of Christ, and therefore eternally lost, were saved only by Christian religion and rule! This type of discourse implied a power transfer from God to Christ to the Pope and by delegation, to the kings, tactically divided between the kings of Portugal and Spain. The religious orders of the Dominicans, Augustinians, Franciscans and the Jesuits claimed the religious right to convert and – together with the military right of the patrons and kings to rule the converted – bring the heathen into the fold of Eurochristian religion and political hegemony. Thus mission and military adventure went hand in hand in the subjugation of the Amerindians. The one expressed the other and strengthened the claims of the other in such a manner that the religious field dominated everything.

The economic interest in trade and precious metals was evident. Political organization remained in the Old World except for the delegated power of the captains and governors with coastal forts or lading enclaves, or the governing responsibility of newly acquired territories.

The early reform movements of Lutheran Germany, Calvinist cities and Anglican England brought religious reform and the reformed institutions into political collaboration with absolutist kings. The rivalries of the Protestant and Catholic societies led the new reformed groups to challenge the trade and profit monopolies of the Iberian kingdoms and a similar story of conquest and colonial possession took place. Its religious meaning was not donated by the Pope but by the right of possession divinely granted to the ruling king.

> Spain, the chief Roman Catholic nation of the whole world, had established her great colonial empire in the New World, and hand in hand with the Spanish conquerors had gone the Spanish Catholic missionaries, and tens of thousands of the natives of New Spain and Peru had been won over to, at least, a nominal acceptance of Catholic Christianity. Should not England, the leading Protestant nation in the whole world, do as much? And thus, by planting colonies in the New World, England herself would not only be benefitted but the cause of Protestantism would likewise be advanced, and the power of Spain might also be held in check (Sweet, 1950: 26).

Thus, the first English colony was established in 1607 in Jamestown with Robert Hunt as its chaplain. "The profit motive dominated the founding of all colonies, and a number of attempts were made to hold the settlers in the position of employees of the company" (Baldwin, 1960: 35) The government was organized by viceregal representation under the general pattern of English rule. Gradually it was eroded. The liberal spirit began to take liberties and demand gubernatorial leniency. The official English view was mercantilist: profit for the traders and for their mother country. There were

mercantilist laws of protection of trade against rival countries such as Holland. The merchants applied for royal charters and on this royal right of possession the first thirteen colonies were formed.

From the Christian point of view, "A Christian may take nothing from a Heathen against his will, but in fair and lawful bargain", as William Crawshaw preached to the first colonizers of the New World. Like Abraham, who bought his piece of land from the heathens for a burial place, they might do no more. "Let us therefore cast aside all cogitation of profit, let us look at better things . . . if in this action we seeke first the kingdome of God, all other things shall be added unto us" (Sweet, 1950: 28). But even a casual reading of the reports on Virginian colonization will show how poorly this was followed. The king himself had not bought his right but claimed it, and profited from it by selling the land to the traders, in one case to William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, in lieu of the credit due to him!

There was also a protracted attempt to convert the Indians. Mission became the strategy of their holy exchange — the concern for God's kingdom by which He added all other things to the preaching people. From this effort resulted the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), and eventually other denominations and churches (Sweet, 1950: 29–43).

Religion and Slavery

With the rise of the plantation economy, which did not bring in any new productive forces as such, there arose the social relations of production: slavery. In 1510 the Portuguese brought their first ship laden with slaves, later culminating in the North European triangular slave trade between Europe, West Africa and America through the great passage. Slavery was introduced into Virginia in 1619 and "added to the economic and social distinctions which were developing" (Baldwin, 1960: 39). It brought into being new political, social and cultural (= symbolic) relations in addition to the already existing religious one.

There were large plantations, trade with Indians and aristocratic intervention into colonial self-government: "The aristocracy entrenched itself in self-perpetuating parish vestries and county courts, introduced primogeniture and entail, limited the suffrage to the well-to-do, and laid grivous taxes on the poor . . . bought . . . cheap and sold goods dear" (Baldwin, 1960: 39–41).

The Hollanders and the Swedes established New Holland and New Sweden colonies and conducted war against each other on the pattern of their mother countries. French intervention confined itself to New Orleans in the South and Canada in the North. They also fought for land and monopoly of trade against the native Indians, pushing them towards the West and decimation. It was a matter of war between Europeans themselves and the Europeans and the Indians.

But it is the slavery, the inhuman relationship of man to things, that needed the legitimation of Christian religion in this period. The earlier

interest was in enslaving Indians or European children and servants, especially those brought from orphanages, but gradually settled against the Negroes with the beginnings of definite racial relations of domination and control. The Catholic Portuguese theologians expressed the compatibility of slavery with Christian principles. In the words of the Jesuit rector of St Paul de Loando:

> . . . this is a matter which has been questioned by the Board of Conscience in Lisbon, and all its members are learned and conscientious men. Nor did the Bishops who were in Sao Thome, Cape Verde, and here in Loando – all learned and virtuous men – find fault with the slave trade. We have been here ourselves for forty years and there has been among us very learned Fathers, in the Province of Brazil as well – never did they consider this trade as illicit. Therefore, we and the fathers of Brazil buy these slaves for our service without any scruple (Kamphausen, 1982: 3).

"The Catholic Church did not only sanction the slave trade and slavery but became a slave holding enterprise herself . . . the Church became part of the enslaving system." The Catholic Inquisition forbade Islamic slaves as well as those passing through Dutch or such other hands, "for the utmost care of the conservation and purity of our Holy Catholic Faith" (Kamphausen, 1982: 3). The Anglican Church leaders held slavery and the slave trade as compatible with their interpretation of Christian religion. There was an effort to convert the slaves, but the missionaries were themselves slave owners. The SPG (estd 1701) itself was a slave-holding institution. The slaves were to be used in "promoting learning and religion". Individual clergymen too were slave-owners. In a letter to the SPG in 1716, Rev. John Urmstone of Carolina wrote requesting to be provided with three or four slaves from Guinea. The comment of Gollwitzer is remarkable: "The Reformation did not change a thing in the fate white people prepared for the coloured people of the world. Whether Rome, Wittenberg, or Geneva prevailed, whether justification before God occurred through works or through faith . . . for the red, the yellow and the black all this was irrelevant" (Kamphausen, 1982: 4).

Pietists, Puritans and Slavery

Pietists, Puritans and Slavery is the second stage of American colonization. They came from different sects and denominations of Europe. Having reacted against the "bourgeois" reformers who aligned themselves against Roman hegemony into religious-political interest groups, religion became state-supporting in a period of aristocratic-monarchist absolutism-mercantilism. The dissatisfied peasants, hand-workers and disgruntled higher-ups reacted, resulting in the peasant wars (in Germany 1525–6) or the formation of the pietist or puritan sects of all confessional colours and shades. The separatist radicals of England, who had fled to Leiden, crossed the Atlantic in the "Mayflower" and established their settlements from the original thirteen colonies to middle areas of America. Cattle and horses were brought in large numbers and gave rise to small "free farmer" holdings against the background of mercantilist and plantation aristocracies: "The

possession of land had . . . been the . . . open sesame to independence, wealth, power and prestige. It is true that the power of land was beginning to bow before that of commerce and industry. . . . The proprietors were of course, land speculators on a grand scale" (Sweet, 1950: 44–65; Baldwin, 1960: 60). However, it provided the new settlers with some situation of freedom and self-expression.

In the late 17th and early 18th century the French Huguenots, the Germans of the Rhineland (1683; Täufer, Mennonites . . .), the Presbyterians of Scots-Irish origin, the Quakers and the Baptists arrived, particularly in the Midlands (Baldwin 1960: 55–60). Most of them came with a sense of religious freedom – away from European continental persecution and deprivation – to possess God's promised land! This self-understanding freedom and the possession of land went hand in hand, one expressing the other. "Nicht um des Besitzes willen, sondern wegen der Freiheit, der Freiheit des Gewissens vor allem, haben sich die aus England ausgewandernden religiösen Sektierer versprochen, das Eigentum als Grundlage eines menschen-würdiges Lebens zu bewahren" (Hirsch, 1982: 4). As Baldwin says, "The average settler was drawn to America by a somewhat different view of its attractions from that of companies and proprietors. Probably first was a yearning for land, in the belief that possession of land would solve the terrible economic and social problems which weighed upon the common man" (Baldwin, 1960: 55).

The organized groups of Puritans, Baptists and Presbyterians, but with the exception of the Quakers, all maintained, if not the slave trade, then slavery. The groups of small farmers denied themselves the luxury of slavery through their concept of freedom for all men, their rejection of political and social domination and war-conscription. Their small homesteads (for household economy) did not tempt them into adopting the slave relations of economic organization. Means also failed them. Whether this existential situation or any other ideal moved them to reject slavery cannot be treated in an exclusive sense, since one was the expression of the other, either logically or ontologically. The organized sects and denominations had their own church institutions and plantations, and slave labour of necessity was their labour force. From this need for slave labour arose the literature, religiously interpreted, of defence of slavery. Willard of Boston, for example, interpreted slavery in terms of the servitude of all men begun "with the Curse" which, in divine providence, had been beneficial to mankind. Cotton Mather urged the masters to teach their slaves that it was God who had caused them to be servants and slaves and that they served Jesus Christ while they were at work for their masters (Kamphausen, 1982: 8–9).

The greatest mixture of different persuasions, faiths and beliefs, exposed to earning a living in diverse social situations, led to certain specific changes that eventually paved the way for religious freedom or tolerance and a crystallization of their political institutions – a mixture of the English system already operative and autonomous in the thirteen colonies and the religious-social organization of the sects and denominations. Most of the pietist-puritan groups rejected church-political institutions but the need to

organize themselves and tolerate each other, and make their economy and social-political life viable in the distant, new but "promised" world in the midst of disease, crop failure, extreme cold and heat and incessant fighting with the Indians, constrained them to make compromises in their original "sectarian" (i.e. pure) attitudes. With the arrival of the Roman Catholics in Maryland the stage was set for a concept of religious tolerance or, as it later came to be known (J.C. Murray), freedom (Sweet, 1950: 66–82). The middle colonies coalesced in accepted religious diversity especially among the reformed Dutch and English Quakers and also the Presbyterians (Sweet, 1950: 83–116; 117–26).

Land-ownership, which provided a broad base for freedom, expressed itself in tendentious attitudes towards social and political equality. In New England allegiance to the English monarch was demanded on oath on arrival in the colonies, but the middle colonies brought relief from such coercion in daily life. The proprietors of plantations, the merchant-traders with their land speculation and the free farmers created conditions of economic and social change in specific directions, socially and politically solidified into the practices of today's America. This created, in turn, two basic cleavages: the aristocracy of the Northern colonies living on trading surplus and land speculation, claiming the original English hegemony for their rights, and the planters–speculators of the Southern colonies and the free farmers of most of the middle colonies.

Education was mostly in the hands of the sects and denominations. The clergy, lawyers and medical fraternity were the professional middle class with one of their centres at Harvard. They mediated much of the institutional backlog in creating the state and society America still claims to be! Their view of the Blacks dominated the political and social scene.

In the wake of this a free intellectual atmosphere, charged with continental European enlightenment and the French philosophy of secular equality, led many of them to wean themselves away from theocratic or rigid religious interpretations of life. From the coalescing of institutions and interests emerged such leaders as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine and, of course, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. It led to new experiences in secular processes and democratic tendencies which the religious groups were incapable of achieving on their own and from within their own religious tradition. These processes, however, cut across sectarian and denominational exclusivity. The difficulties of making a living also led many to extreme religiosity as expressed in the so-called "Great Awakening" (Sweet, 1950: 127–71), especially under the leadership of Jonathan Edward of Philadelphia. The emergence of new political institutions and coalitions on the one hand and the extreme religiosity on the other blended into the course of total independence from continental and English hegemony, the formation of organized states and non-organized territories and a certain overall unity of the dispersed colonies. Outwardly this balanced the inner, disparate interests of the newly emerging middle, educated classes, the trader-merchants, the entrepreneurs and the Southern planters, but no less the free farmers.

Religion and Post-Independence Compromises

At the time of American Independence there were more than 3105 religious sects in America and of these, about 1000 were in New England (Sweet, 1950: 172–3). The open spirit of discussion, disregard for priest–bishop hierarchy, councils and creeds had opened a way for their political councils, states and union, more easily than imagined. Economically, politically and religiously the hegemony of European feudal society was not a dead weight, though there were new American interests in their own polarizations. The war of independence in 1776 removed the monarchic yoke although royal sympathizers continued to exist among the aristocrats and perhaps among quite a large number of people the king was not regarded as an enemy of the people. The constitutional convention was able to balance different sectional interests, and states and people – the politically stable units and popular diverse interests – were given representation with a constitution, a president elected at an election convention, two houses of congress and representation and federal and state checks and limits (Barker, 1977: 21–2). The last thing they could have expected was party politics! (Barker, 1977: 23). Thomas Jefferson, one of the post-Independence leaders, said that the ideal America was a nation of farmers governing themselves, with a federal government exercising the minimum of influence. Individuals should do things for themselves. The government's job was merely to preserve law and order, not to initiate schemes of internal improvement and banking (Barker, 1977: 23).

The consequence of a federal union and state formations was agitation for state and church separation, affecting basically the Anglican church. It resulted in the national organization of American churches in a general way. The Methodists were the first to form such a national organization (Sweet, 1950: 193). In consequence of this separation much symbolic shift took place from the church to the state as a nation – the emotion of the immigrants was canalized to be the emotion of the native born!

After the period of independence, the westward movement of the population, in search of pasture and most importantly of gold, was more rapid. New revolutions, added to the frontier spirit, gave a new impetus to freedom and sectarian preaching kept it alive! The result was a kind of ideomorphic syncretism of ideas and spirit! It also led, given a variety of frontier problems, to a new religious awakening and in the wake of it followed the reorganization of most of the churches' missions both within the American territories and without (Sweet, 1950: 243–57). After the adoption of the Constitution, till the 1830s, there was a religious and political nationalism referred to previously, their mutual separation and a kind of amalgam of both fields – an American pot-boiler of ideas and practices moulded by politico-religious intervention.

Religion and the Abolition of Slavery

The political system filled the needs of a Union that was steadily growing in

size: Indiana (1816), Mississippi (1817), Illinois (1818), Alabama (1819), Maine (1820), Missouri (1821), Arkansas (1834), Michigan (1837), Texas, Florida (1845) and Iowa (1846). . . . Railways had strengthened the ties between regions and manufacture and inventions were giving shape to an emerging industry, especially in the Northern states. Banking and finance houses were also raising their heads. In response to these growing interests two parties arose and coalesced into different sectional interests, namely the Whigs and the Democrats. The main issues in the period from 1824 onwards were tariffs, the United States Bank, the cost of buying western lands and the validity of Federal funds being used to finance improvements in communication. Whigs and Democrats in different localities did not have the same view of things as their fellow Whigs and Democrats in localities elsewhere (Barker, 1977: 26). The parties were on an uneasy basis bringing together different sectional interests to be reconciled with each other through bargaining and compromise.

With the question of slavery the political kaleidoscope solidified into a definite unbreakable pattern and led to the restless religious 1840s and to the eventual break-up of all denominational and sectarian ideals! Here one could ask: how did slavery become the crucial issue? Did it characterize the Union at the break-up of the agrarian into an industrial epoch? Did slavery imply the conditions of existence of the South, and in its search for a solid hold on the political institutions and religion end in the last act of secession and war?

In the first half of the 19th century the immigration of Irish, Germans and Italians created a heavy population concentration in the North, and the South had an advantage in the westward expansion. As such the North did profit from the slave economy of the South in the initial stages, but gradually it created the problem of free consumption which could not have been created by slave-holding. Besides, the need of the South's economy to expand to the West was enhanced by European immigration (Barker, 1977: 28–30). The attitudes towards politics, religion, law and economics were all subtly altered by the impact of the frontier. The man of the frontier regions became the new man of a new promised land (Barker, 1977: 30). With this westward movement the South tried using its political leverage to get slavery accepted into the frontier and Western states and as territories. There were religious factors that created a threatening climate against the interests of the South. The Quakers had begun a humanitarian and Christian movement against slave-holding. Although William Penn, the founder of the "holy experiment" was himself a holder of slaves in 1718 (Kamphausen, 1982: 10), Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce in England had roused Parliament and the social consciousness against slavery which resulted in the abolition of slavery in England in 1807 and in the English territories in 1833. This movement took intensive shape in the latter awakening of America. Those in the South, not in agreement, ended in controversy and the churches ended by breaking up over the issue in schism throughout North and South (Sweet, 1950: 285–309). We cannot speak of a singular Christian ideal at work in the attempt to abolish slavery. The division of the groups along faith-lines in defending or

condemning slavery is a clear indication of the more-than-Christian rub at work!

Slavery had not become an issue in the war of independence, but the political leaders of national importance had expected it to die out within a generation or two. Not that they took a positive attitude towards the Blacks, nor would they see the church-oriented politicians and abolitionists ready to take the liberty of freely associating with the Blacks. There were plans to transport the Blacks back to Africa. The "puritan" attitude of not wishing to pollute one's God-given land with slavery and the Blacks was not, by any ideal, "Christian" but, characteristically, it was Amerochristian!

With the abolition of slavery in England and its consequences for America, the cotton plantations began to breed slaves. Their economic prosperity depended on the expansion of slave states to bring profits. Hence the Southern interests further confirmed their need to control western expansion and dealing in slaves.

The South had failed to diversify its economy. The historical constraints of its organization were the limiting factors in non-diversification. The new immigrants did not relish the idea of settling down in slave states and the economy of the North and the West showed marked diversity in their economic organization which could stabilize them against such problems as slavery. The free farmers, the new immigrants lured by homesteads (not too innumerable!) also created a potential outcry against slavery.

Politically, the South had won strategic positions in Congress, the judiciary and often in the Presidency itself. It had succeeded in passing laws or compromises that did not threaten its existence dependent on slave economy. The Dred Scot issue, the alliance with the Northern Democrats and the compromises of the 1850s in states and territories such as Kansas, Nebraska, etc., gave it political and constitutional leverage. Religion also provided a secure basis of interpretation. When slavery was abolished the Southern churches created a biblical defence of slave-holding and politically used all their advantages to maintain slave labour and the slave economy. The political institutions had become their lever in creating the conditions of their existence with slave labour.

With intensified political and religious onslaughts on their slave-holding, which then became a moral issue, the basis of the South's economy and survival was at stake. The reaction of the South was sharp and retaliatory. A thaw in the situation was created by social–religious propaganda against them, and the political Republican Party initiated moves to make abolition of slavery its party programme. The election of Lincoln in 1860 as President made the South suspect that it had lost control of the necessary political institutions. In early 1861 the South carried out its threat by seceding from the Union and declaring war on the North. What would have happened if the South had not declared war? It is an historical question without answer. The North was left with the only option of fighting back and organizing itself towards the abolition of slavery, the basis of the existence of the economy of the South. After the war was won by the North, the new industrial democracy created conditions for establishing order in the economy and social and political organization.

Conclusions

In the case of the American Civil War the social function of religion was not as decisive as in the origins of American society. It had given a place to political institutions created out of its own history, circumstances and limits in America. However, it played a supportive and representative role in the political field in shaping the new economic order, mediating by its open fight against slavery as a system but not as a result of racial relationships between the Whites and the Blacks. It supported the creation of an industrial democracy abolishing slavery but maintaining the "new" racial relations — a phenomenon the United States of America have maintained in opposition to the spirit of an idealized constitution of human equality which ironically excluded, in word and spirit, the Blacks as an ever-continuing embarrassment (Gunnar Myrdal) of its spirit or as its original reality. The murder of Martin Luther King Jr sealed this original embarrassment, carrying it forward into the second half of the 20th century.

NOTES

1. This essay was originally written as a Referat with the following title: "Religion and the Civil War in America: The Social Functions of Religion in the Origin and Formation of America", at the Faculty of Social- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, seminar no. 05.442, Winter Semester 1981–2, Ursachen des Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieges (Oberseminar of Dr Prof. Hans-Jürgen Goertz).

2. Marx wrote a series of 37 articles in *Die Press* in 1861. Cf. MEW 15.

3. Marx's slogan on the historical conditioning of human affairs is well known. Weber is more subtle: "In action is included all human behaviour when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it" (Weber, 1947: 88); or ". . . we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a definite attitude toward the world and to lend it significance" (Weber, 1949: 81).

4. The contemporary studies of the Civil War have value as acknowledged viewpoints of the participants, and should be taken into account in any analysis of the forces at work. Marx derisively points out to the view of the English press: "this brilliant discovery" (Marx, 1977: 334–5), thereby referring to the tariff war between free trade and protectionism of the times. He intended to then analyse the underlying issues and causes.

5. By 1900 the manufactured products of the South were four times as much as in 1860.

6. National sovereignty with presidential powers was to contrast with "the political theory of the constitution".

7. Today these spirituals have been taken over by all "The Alternatives" of Europe and the "White World" as symbols of liberation in a spiritual, sometimes even in a material, sense.

8. Marx's argument with the opinions of the British press sees the slave problem as the basis of the political and economic war.

9. Marx refers to its phantastic character apropos money fetishism. In "liberal" democracy it is privatized and specialized for a few fields such as education, social work and charities.

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