



Revised History

With Lincoln It Was “My Way Or The Highway”

By Al Benson Jr., July 28th, 2022

Due to his mystical view of an “eternal, perpetual Union” Lincoln had not the slightest concept of anything approaching a Southern viewpoint in America. For him it was totally “my way or the highway” and he wasn’t even willing to grant the Southern states the use of the highway. He would impose his (holy) will on the country no matter what. For him, the ends (his perpetual Union) justified whatever means he had to use to attain them.

Even the thought of secession was anathema to Lincoln. In his book “Lincoln’s Little War” Webb Garrison observed: “Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens were among the most vocal Southern proponents of the argument that secession was a constitutional right. When New Jersey and New York ratified the Constitution in 1787 and 1788 respectively, both states “expressly reserved the right of secession.” Although Garrison felt could be debated, I disagree with him on that. Virginia and Rhode Island also reserved the right to secede—and nobody complained. Garrison also noted: “In New York it was taken seriously during the early decades of the republic. Even Daniel Webster espoused this doctrine during his speeches against the War of 1812.” So, this doctrine should have been taken seriously.

Garrison also observed: “Addressing a mass meeting in Boston, orator Edward Everett thundered ‘To hold the states in the Union by force is preposterous.’ Caleb Cushing of Boston considered it ‘the duty of the Southern states to separate from the Northern states’...A Wisconsin newspaper pointed out that the framers of the Constitution expected secession. That was the reason, it argued, that no clause permitting the use of force against a seceding state was included in the document.”

And Garrison commented that, had Northern voters been given a chance to say what they thought, a goodly number would have been opposed to any move that would have involved armed conflict between the two sections of the country. Again, Lincoln’s convoluted concept of an eternal Union militated against opposing doctrine. If Lincoln had his way, he would give the North Fort Sumter instead of a chance to vote against sectional violence.

Of course, Lincoln had some practical and pragmatic considerations in mind also. If the South seceded, then who would pay for his tariff? Lincoln figured like a lot of Yankee merchants that you can’t afford to let a cash cow like the South get out of the barn. It is a fact that the South paid over 80% of the tariffs for the whole country. And Lincoln wanted to make sure they stayed around to keep paying through the nose!

Garrison noted of Lincoln that: “...his background on the Western frontier lacked any sensitivity to the attitudes in the South and the East. When he called for troops, he did not realize that even among many of his volunteers, their primary loyalty was to their state rather than to the nation.”

What’s more, I doubt if that would have made any difference to him. Lincoln had a myopic vision of where he wanted to take the country, and he would do that, come hell or high water, or both! If you wonder why we have the problems we have today, look at where Lincoln’s consolidationist theology has brought us and you may begin to understand why.