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US History

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Summary Sessions

Moral Reasons For The Civil War

The reasons for the American Civil War are many, but the reasons that kept the soldiers fighting in conditions that frequently ranged into the inhuman are the same. The moral sense of duty that abounded in the soldiers and the civilians on both sides of the line of battle is a blueprint of the character of American citizenry. The most important moral reasons for the Civil War was the institution of slavery that abounded in the south but was minimal in the north. Throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s the ethical problem of holding another person as property became a central discussion point for both religious and cultural leaders. While the abolitionists' movement started small, it quickly became the all-encompassing issue that would define the future of America.

The cultural debate on the ethics of slavery was headed by a wide range of characters with vastly different life experiences, but the central discussion point was consistent. Those major abolitionist leaders in the north believed that self-determination was the right of all people and that neither race nor ethnicity should be subject to criticism of their basic human rights. While for many people in the early days of the cultural abolitionist movement were much more interested in the economic nature of slavery, as those prominent abolitionists many of whom were high ranking government and cultural officials who held great sway over the thoughts of those who lived within their scope it became a discussion point for the common individual. These newspaper editors and government officials started to spread the message of abolition as a moral fight for the character of the nation in the North. While the view that all southern farmers held slaves has become more commonplace over the last two centuries, that view is wholly misguided. An overwhelming percentage of slaves were held by a select percentage of white plantation owners, and these are the prominent individuals who propagated the view in the south to mobilize the populace in favor of slavery that someday they could have a slave to do their work for them too. This message mobilized the people as an early draft of the American Dream, and encouraged them to fight for the institution of slavery even if they had no direct stake in it.

The religious debate on the ethics of slavery is even more nuanced than the cultural debate on the subject, as the views of individual preachers were dispersed on to individual parishioners, leading to small differences from Parish to Parish and even greater differences from the north to the south where major bishops debated the religious nature of slavery. In the North the fight against slavery was imbued with a sense of religious significance, where troops and civilians were carrying out the will of god in the fight against the hedonistic slave owners. Northern religious leaders tried to use the righteousness of emancipation that was spread through religious documents as a religious precedent for the war, making it a just undertaking just as European religious leaders in medieval times used precedents such as this to encourage men to go on crusade. Major southern religious leaders and individual plantation owners used the "Curse of Ham" as a biblical precedent for the owning of other people(despite the biblical quotation actually being only tangentially relevant).

[Upon the Altar Of The Nation](https://origins.osu.edu/review/upon-altar-nation-moral-history-civil-war?language_content_entity=en)

[Greatamericahistory.net](https://greatamericanhistory.net/causes.htm)

[Bartleby.com](https://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Moral-Causes-Of-The-American-Civil-FCH7A6KM6R)

[The Curse Of Ham](https://time.com/5171819/christianity-slavery-book-excerpt/)