



Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War (A Nation Divided: Studies in the Civil War Era)

By Charles B. Dew

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In late 1860 and early 1861, state-appointed commissioners traveled the length and breadth of the slave South carrying a fervent message in pursuit of a clear goal: to persuade the political leadership and the citizenry of the uncommitted slave states to join in the effort to destroy the Union and forge a new Southern nation.

Directly refuting the neo-Confederate contention that slavery was neither the reason for secession nor the catalyst for the resulting onset of hostilities in 1861, Charles B. Dew finds in the commissioners' brutally candid rhetoric a stark white supremacist ideology that proves the contrary. The commissioners included in their speeches a constitutional justification for secession, to be sure, and they pointed to a number of political "outrages" committed by the North in the decades prior to Lincoln's election. But the core of their argument—the reason the right of secession had to be invoked and invoked immediately—did not turn on matters of constitutional interpretation or political principle. Over and over again, the commissioners returned to the same point: that Lincoln's election signaled an unequivocal commitment on the part of the North to destroy slavery and that emancipation would plunge the South into a racial nightmare.

Dew's discovery and study of the highly illuminating public letters and speeches of these apostles of disunion—often relatively obscure men sent out to convert the unconverted to the secessionist cause—have led him to suggest that the arguments the commissioners presented provide us with the best evidence we have of the motives behind the secession of the lower South in 1860–61.

Addressing topics still hotly debated among historians and the public at large more than a century after the Civil War, Dew challenges many current perceptions of the causes of the conflict. He offers a compelling and clearly substantiated argument that slavery and race were absolutely critical factors in the outbreak of war—indeed, that they were at the heart of our great national crisis.

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Editorial Review

Review

This incisive history should dispel the pernicious notion that the Confederacy fought the Civil War to advance the constitutional principle of states' rights and only coincidentally to preserve slavery.

(The New York Times Book Review)

Dew has produced an eye-opening study....So much for states' rights as the engine of secession.

(James McPherson The New York Review of Books)

Charles B. Dew offers a penetrating and incisive evaluation of secessionist ideology, with a clear eye to the priority of race over issues of constitutional rights. The principal source on which the book is built certainly appears neglected to me, and the source is worthy of exploitation: we have an opportunity here to see what Southerners said to each other and not what they said primarily to the North or to the world.

(Mark E. Neely Jr., Pulitzer Prize-winning author of The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties and Southern Rights: Political Prisoners and the Myth of Confederate Constitutionalism)

With stunning clarity, *Apostles of Disunion* reminds us that race and slavery were at the center of the march toward secession. This small but powerful book should be required reading for all students of the Civil War.

(Dwight T. Pitcaithley, Chief Historian, National Park Service)

Drawing on the records of secession commissioners, Charles B. Dew has provided a stunning analysis of the South's decision to leave the United States, which brought on the Civil War. This is an important study, meticulously researched and convincingly argued. Especially now, when heated debates about the display of the Confederate flag and the historical meaning of Civil War reenactment strain the social fabric of the nation, this book is a must-read.

(James Oliver Horton, author of The Landmarks of African American History)

About the Author

Charles B. Dew, W. Van Alan Clark Third Century Professor in the Social Sciences at Williams College, is the author of *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge* and *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works*.

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Evelyn Roberts:

Exactly why? Because this Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War (A Nation Divided: Studies in the Civil War Era) is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap that but latter it will zap you with the secret this inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book have got such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I had been you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Jaime McKenney:

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