

James M. McPherson

What Caused the Civil War: Slavery, States' Rights, or Secession?

Viewpoint presented by James M. McPherson

December 19, 2010, interview on NPR with Dr. James McPherson titled *The Civil War Is Still Being Fought, Civilly*.

Pro-Lincoln revisionist James McPherson, during said interview, postulated that slavery was the "basic and most deep-rooted cause [main cause] of the Civil War." McPherson adamantly believes that the sole abolition of the Southern institution of slavery was the principal cause of why more than 620,000 Americans had fought and died. (Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery.)

What does history, however, state as the cause or causes of the American Civil War? Furthermore, what were the motives (not to be confused with cause or causes) as to why 620,000 Southern and Northern soldiers fought, bled, died?

Why and How does Civil War Revisionism prevail?

Dr. James McPherson is a proponent of historical revisionism. In the September 2003 *Perspectives*, James McPherson, while referring to himself and fellow historians, wrote: "The unending quest of historians, for understanding the past—that is, 'revisionism'—is what makes history vital and meaningful." (Revisionist James McPherson comes under fire and Author and pro-President Abraham Lincoln Revisionist Admits to Forgery.)

Here is an example of how history becomes very skewed and 'revised'. Here is a quote from a December 19, 2010, NPR interview with Dr. James McPherson:

"Well, history says, and I would say probably 98 percent of historians would say, that the basic and most deep-rooted cause of the [Civil] War was slavery and the question of the future of slavery in the United States."

Also, according to James McPherson, on page 79 in his (2009) book titled *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*, he states:

"Many Southerners who did not own slaves hoped and expected to be able to do so in the future."

McPherson has postulated that 1) only abolition of the institution of slavery was the principal or main cause of the Civil War and that 2) it was the deep-rooted cause of why more than 620,000 Americans volunteered, fought, and died, and that 3) many Southern soldiers only fought in bloody combat in hopes of owning at least one slave in the future. (Of course, as expected, McPherson doesn't apply a single source to any position.)

McPherson, you honestly don't believe that

In both debate and law, one is taught to use facts and sources, and to be careful when applying the word most when referring to a group. The word most literally infers that one is discussing the majority of the group, but, on the other hand, the word many doesn't necessarily refer to the majority but it may refer to several. So, moreover, for McPherson to state "98 percent" without one source is total and absolute speculation and bias.

Martin J. Weiner, of Rice University, describes much of McPherson's biased material as "the most unprofessional I have seen in 35 years of reading..."

McPherson is so pompous and arrogant as to state that "Well, history says, and I would say probably 98 percent of historians would say..." So now McPherson is history's spokesperson? Furthermore, if "98 percent" of all historians agree that slavery was the deep-rooted cause of the American Civil War, then why, oh why, on earth do we have so much division today, and throughout history, as to what caused the Civil War?

McPherson is an Extremist

Historians may state that slavery was the deep-rooted cause of the Civil War, but wow, to state that 98% of historians agree to said statement is ludicrous at best. One must only imagine how McPherson derived "probably 98 percent", since he has no source, neither will he ever have one.

McPherson's postulation and blatant disregard for the views of fellow historians couldn't be clearer. He is so kind, however, and does allow 2% of the world's historians another position on what caused the Civil War. For example, Secession.

According to author, now prophet, James McPherson, on page 79 in his (2009) book titled The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference:

"Many Southerners who did not own slaves hoped and expected to be able to do so in the future." (Not one source is given, but if one is a prophet...)

Revisionist McPherson has an Anti-Southern Agenda and can not be Trusted

In an interview with Democracy Now in 1999, (after fellow radical and extremist Ed Sebesta had spoken) James McPherson stated adamantly:

"I think, I agree a 100% with Ed Sebesta about the motives or the hidden agenda, not too, not too deeply hidden I think of such groups as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. They are dedicated to celebrating the Confederacy and rather thinly veiled support for white supremacy. And I think that also is the again not very deeply hidden agenda of the Confederate flag issue in several southern states."

McPherson under fire for outlandish bias and lack of scholarly research

"The North won the Civil War in large part because Lincoln and the best of his generals were better strategists than their counterparts in Dixie." James M. McPherson, North and South Magazine

Most scholars disagree with McPherson's opinion stating that the North won the Civil War because it had Lincoln and his generals, the so-called "better strategists."

Most scholars emphasize that the Union held an insurmountable long-term advantage over the Confederacy in terms of industrial strength and population. The North won the war by superior weaponry, greater numbers in manpower (4-to-1 ratio) (21,700,000 = North; 5,600,000 = South), great bloodshed via attrition, and the luck of the Irish. Use Bing search engine, for example, because James M. McPherson has always painted the South, with its culture, as inferior, yet slave-mongering, rednecks and racists.

The practice of espousing contemporary political beliefs in McPherson's columns, in Perspectives, drew backlash and criticism from several American Historical Association (AHA) members who wrote letters to the editor of "Perspectives":

David F. Krein, of Scott Community College in Iowa, responded: "McPherson seems intent to use his 2003 term as AHA president as his own "bully pulpit" (as president of the AHA) to promote a personal political agenda" and "implore(d) him to stop" the politicization of his column "for the dignity of the profession of historians."

Don McArthur, of Maine South High School in Illinois, stated: "McPherson's politics were furthering a general public mistrust of academic historians" and requested that he "moderate his obviously intense political aversion to the (Bush) administration" when writing in official AHA publications.

Martin J. Weiner, of Rice University, described McPherson's columns as "the most unprofessional thing I have seen in 35 years of reading Perspectives," the AHA's newsletter in which they were published, and suggested the organization's Professional Division should consider McPherson's actions as an "abuse of his office." (Revisionist James McPherson.)

"Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dr. James McPherson, with his bias and unprofessional agenda and his incessant and baseless bashing against all things Confederate and Southern, has brought great discord to the entire field and study of Civil War history. McPherson has brought reproach to the Pulitzer* and also exhibits classic signs of narcissism."
americancivilwarhistory.org

Conclusion

Revisionist James McPherson, consequently, further shows and declares quite clearly his extremely pro-Northern bias and agenda, his pompous attitude, and how the sheeple are led easily to the slaughter of ignorance.

Did McPherson conduct a poll? Is he even referring to a poll? He is referring to which historians?

Since he also states that "history says" as well as "98 percent of historians," there is no wiggle room with this gross exaggerator named McPherson.

McPherson knows all too well that the conflicting lines regarding the causes of the Civil War are not so clear as to boast that 98 percent of historians agree to slavery as its deep-rooted cause. McPherson has shown blatantly his true blue revisionist colors. His bias, for sure, is now also 98% certain.

When making such wild and broad assumptions, we see vividly why Revisionist McPherson is not exempt from the use of facts and sources.

One thing is 98 percent certain, we know where you stand, Mr McPherson.

* Some critics of the Pulitzer Prize have accused the organization of favoring those who support liberal causes or oppose conservative causes. Syndicated columnist L. Brent Bozell said that the Pulitzer Prize has a "liberal legacy," particularly in its prize for commentary. He pointed to a 31-year period in which only 5 conservatives won prizes for commentary. The claim is also supported by a statement from the 2010 Pulitzer Prize winner for commentary, Kathleen Parker: "it's only because I'm a conservative basher that I'm now recognized." Bozell, Brent (2007-04-22). "Pulitzers' liberal legacy". Pittsburgh Tribune-Review; Hagey, Keach (4 October 2010). "Kathleen Parker: 'Smallish-town girl' hits cable". Politico.

<http://thomaslegion.net/whatcausedthecivilwarcauses.html>