

# Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 13, Slavery and the Churches, Civil War Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Green, American Christianity, Session 13, Slavery and the Churches, Civil War, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Roger Green's lecture explores the complex relationship between American Christianity and slavery, specifically during the Civil War era. The session chronologically traces the rise of antislavery sentiments and abolitionist movements within various denominations, highlighting key figures like William Lloyd Garrison. It then examines how different Christian denominations reacted to the issue of slavery, noting divisions within groups like Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, as well as the reasons why others like Congregationalists and Lutherans did not formally split. The lecture further investigates the religious allegiances of the North and South during the Civil War and presents varying interpretations of the conflict. Finally, the emergence and early growth of the Black Church in America, exemplified by the African Methodist Episcopal Church under Richard Allen, is discussed as a significant development within this historical context.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Green, American Christianity, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Church History → American Christianity).**



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on13.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Green, American Christianity, Session 13, Slavery and the Churches, Civil War

#### Briefing Document: Slavery, the Church, and the Civil War in American Christianity

**Overview:** This document summarizes Dr. Roger Green's lecture (Session 13) on how anti-slavery and abolitionist sentiments developed in American culture and the reactions of various Christian denominations to the issue of slavery, culminating in the Civil War. The lecture explores the chronological rise of abolitionist thought, the divisions within major denominations (Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians) over slavery, the stances of denominations that did not divide (Congregationalists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics), and the differing interpretations of the Civil War itself. The lecture also briefly introduces the formation of the Black Church in America, specifically focusing on the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

##### 1. Chronological Development of Anti-Slavery Sentiment:

- **Early Quaker Influence:** The Quakers are identified as an early group with anti-slavery sentiments, formalizing their opposition around 1775.
- **Methodist Stance (Early):** In 1784, at the Christmas Conference, the Methodists initially declared that no Methodist could own slaves. This early stance would later be challenged.
- **Edwardsians:** While Jonathan Edwards himself owned slaves, his intellectual followers began to question and speak out against slavery in the 1770s.
- **Colonization Society (1817):** While ultimately unsuccessful, the Colonization Society is presented as a transitional movement that raised awareness of the slavery problem.
- **Founding of Oberlin College (1835):** Oberlin College was established as an explicitly abolitionist and the first co-educational college in America, highlighting the growing institutionalization of abolitionist ideals.
- **William Lloyd Garrison:** Garrison is presented as a pivotal figure who advocated for the immediate abolition of slavery through his journal, "The Public Liberator" (founded January 1, 1831), and public speaking. He was a divisive figure, demanding immediate liberation with "no discussion," which created rifts even

within the abolitionist movement. Dr. Green poses the question: "Sometimes, in order to move a cause forward, you need this kind of personality."

## 2. Reactions of Churches to Slavery (Divided Denominations):

- **Methodists:** John Wesley himself called slavery "that villainy of villainies," and early Methodism opposed it.
- A "gradual creep" of slave ownership occurred among Methodists, leading to dissent.
- **Orange Scott:** Incensed by Methodist slave ownership, Scott formed the **Wesleyan Methodist Church** in 1843, where slave ownership was forbidden.
- **Division of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1844):** Due to the issue of a slaveholding bishop, the church split geographically into the **Methodist Episcopal Church (Northern)**, which prohibited slave ownership, and the **Methodist Episcopal Church, South**, which allowed it. Green notes that one can still find churches in the South with cornerstones indicating "Methodist Episcopal Church, South."
- **Baptists:** The Baptist denomination (generally the main North and South factions) also split in **1844**.
- The issue was whether missionaries could own slaves.
- The **Southern Baptist Convention** was formed in **1845** on the principle that it was acceptable for Baptists to hold slaves. Dr. Green mentions a recent (4-6 years prior to the lecture) discussion within the Southern Baptist Convention about potentially changing its name due to its historical ties to slavery, though the name was ultimately retained.
- **Presbyterians:** The Presbyterians split later, towards the end of the Civil War (**1864**).
- The **Northern Presbyterians** became the **Presbyterian Church in the USA**, while the **Southern Presbyterians** formed the **Presbyterian Church in the United States**.
- Northern Presbyterians forbade slaveholding, while Southern Presbyterians allowed it.

### 3. Reactions of Churches to Slavery (Non-Divided Denominations):

- **Congregationalists:** Did not divide due to their largely Northern, particularly New England, concentration and unified anti-slavery sentiment.
- **Lutherans:** Based on Martin Luther's theology of two governments (church and state), the Lutheran church decided not to become involved in the political issue of slavery. Individual territorial Lutheran groups made their own decisions regarding slave ownership.
- **Episcopalians:** Similar to Lutherans, Episcopalians did not divide. They allowed different regions to make their own decisions regarding slavery. The **Oxford Movement** in England, which drew some American Episcopalians' attention towards Anglo-Catholicism and potential union with the Roman Catholic Church, may have also diverted focus from the slavery debate for some.
- **Roman Catholic Church:** Pope Gregory XVI condemned the slave trade.
- In America, Archbishop Francis Kenrick of Baltimore adopted a pragmatic approach to maintain unity, allowing the "status quo" where abolitionist and slaveholding Roman Catholics coexisted.
- Some Roman Catholics believed in a "due process of law" that would eventually abolish slavery.
- The Roman Catholic Church successfully reconciled North and South after the war.

### 4. Religious Allegiance and Interpretations of the Civil War:

- **Religious Allegiance Based on Geography:** Ministers in the North encouraged fighting for the freedom of slaves, while ministers in the South urged defense of their political agenda and the right to own slaves. Both sides believed they had biblical justification.
- **Prayers for Victory:** Both North and South prayed and sang for victory, illustrating the deep religious dimensions of the conflict. Examples include a Southern prayer asking God to "Lay thou their legions low" and Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which Dr. Green humorously notes he doesn't fully understand ("Romanticism gone mad").
- **Post-War Reconciliation:** Reconciliation was difficult. The North viewed the South as needing "evangelization," while the South resented the North's "federalist cause" and perceived infringement on states' rights regarding slavery.

- **Southern Interpretation of the War:** Viewed it as "malicious interference by the North" and hoped for "divine retribution" against the North.
- **Northern Interpretation of the War:** Attributed the war to "plotting political renegades in the South" and believed their victory was "divine retribution" against the South for its sins.
- **Abraham Lincoln's Sophisticated Interpretation:** Advocated for:
  - Less confidence in knowing God's purposes.
  - Awareness of the ambiguity in historical processes.
  - Less assurance of the moral purity of one's own side.
- Lincoln believed that by embracing these principles, the Civil War could become a meaningful learning experience for the entire American people, leading to repentance, recognition of sin, and reconciliation.
- **A More Nuanced Theological Interpretation:** Some ministers viewed the war as "a divine act of judgment for the collective guilt of the American people," a "sacrificial and cleansing tragedy" with the potential for national preservation and regeneration (Askew and Perard).

## 5. The Black Church in America (Methodist Beginnings):

- The first black church among the Methodists was the **African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)**, formed in **Philadelphia in 1814**. This was due to "tremendous friction between blacks and whites, Methodist blacks and whites" over issues of slavery and racial prejudice.
- **Richard Allen:** A highly significant figure, Allen founded the AME Church and became its first bishop. He had previously established the **Bethel Church** in Philadelphia for black Methodists (not a separate denomination).
- **Ordination of Richard Allen:** Francis Asbury ordained Richard Allen, signifying the importance of the black church and its leadership.
- **Growth of the AME Church:** Membership grew significantly from approximately 22,000 in 1860 to nearly 500,000 by 1896.
- **Impact of the AME Church:** The denomination was the first to develop a black magazine and the first university for blacks in America, demonstrating its significant role in the African American community.

### Quotes:

- **John Wesley on slavery:** "that villainy of villainies."
- **William Lloyd Garrison's stance:** Immediate abolition of slavery, "with no discussion."
- **Southern prayer:** "Lay thou their legions low, roll back the ruthless foe, and let the proud spoiler know God's on our side."
- **From Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic":** "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free. Our God, our God is marching on." and "In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me..."
- **Southern interpretation of the war:** "malicious interference by the North."
- **Northern interpretation of the war:** "plotting political renegades in the South."
- **Lincoln's principle:** "everybody should have a little less confidence that they know the purposes of God."
- **Lincoln's principle:** "everybody should be aware of ambiguity in historical processes."
- **Lincoln's principle:** "everybody should be less assured of their, of the, of the moral purity of their side."
- **Askew and Perard on interpreting the war:** "The war was a divine act of judgment for the collective guilt of the American people. The conflict was a sacrificial and cleansing tragedy with the potential for not only preserving the nation but regenerating it as well."

### Further Considerations:

- The lecture highlights the complex and often contradictory relationship between Christianity and the institution of slavery in America.
- Different theological interpretations of the Bible were used to justify both pro- and anti-slavery positions.
- Even abolitionist churches could exhibit racial segregation and inequality.
- The formation of independent black churches was a crucial step in the struggle for racial equality and self-determination within the Christian context.

- The Civil War had a profound and lasting impact on the religious landscape of the United States.

## 4. Study Guide: Green, American Christianity, Session 13, Slavery and the Churches, Civil War

### Slavery, the Church, and the Civil War: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What was the significance of the Christmas Conference of 1784 for the Methodist Church regarding slavery?
2. Explain the role and significance of the Colonization Society mentioned in the lecture.
3. Why was William Lloyd Garrison a divisive figure in the abolitionist movement?
4. What was the key difference between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church regarding slave ownership?
5. On what principle did the Southern Baptist Convention form in 1845?
6. Describe the theological justification used by some churches to permit slave ownership, as mentioned in the lecture.
7. Why did the Congregationalists not divide over the issue of slavery during this period?
8. Explain the Lutheran understanding of the relationship between the church and the state in the context of slavery.
9. What was Pope Gregory XVI's stance on slavery and the slave trade?
10. What were the key elements of Abraham Lincoln's "more sophisticated" interpretation of the Civil War?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. At the Christmas Conference of 1784, the Methodist Church declared that no person who claimed to be Methodist could own slaves. This was an early and significant institutional stance against slavery taken by a major American denomination.



2. The Colonization Society, founded in 1817, is described as a transitional society that awakened people to the problem of slavery, even though it ultimately failed in its goal of relocating freed slaves outside of the United States.
3. William Lloyd Garrison advocated for the immediate abolition of slavery without any compromise or discussion, which created deep divisions among abolitionists, as some preferred a more gradual and measured approach.
4. The Wesleyan Methodist Church, formed by Orange Scott in 1843, explicitly forbade slave ownership for its members, while the Methodist Episcopal Church initially allowed it, leading to the later split into Northern and Southern branches.
5. The Southern Baptist Convention formed in 1845 on the principle that it was permissible for Baptists to hold slaves, leading to a denominational split with their Northern counterparts.
6. Some churches justified allowing slave ownership by pointing to the New Testament, where they found no explicit command for the immediate abolition of slavery and saw passages that seemed to regulate the practice.
7. The Congregationalists, largely located in the North and heavily concentrated in New England, did not divide over slavery due to their geographical unity and widespread anti-slavery sentiment within their congregations.
8. Lutheran theology, based on Martin Luther's concept of two governments (church and state), held that the church should focus on spiritual matters, leaving the political issue of slavery to the state to decide.
9. Pope Gregory XVI reiterated the Roman Catholic Church's anti-slavery position and encouraged the condemnation of the slave trade worldwide.
10. Lincoln's interpretation emphasized less confidence in knowing God's purposes, an awareness of ambiguity in historical processes, and a questioning of the moral purity of one's own side in the conflict.

## Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the reasons why some major American Protestant denominations (Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians) experienced division over the issue of slavery, while others (Congregationalists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics) did not.
2. Compare and contrast the differing interpretations of the Civil War in the North and the South, as presented in the lecture. How did religious beliefs contribute to these interpretations?
3. Discuss the significance of William Lloyd Garrison to the abolitionist movement. Evaluate the lecturer's statement that "sometimes, in order to move a cause forward, you need this kind of personality."
4. Explain the formation and early significance of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. How did this independent black denomination address the challenges faced by African American Christians during this period?
5. Evaluate the "more sophisticated" interpretation of the Civil War, as exemplified by Abraham Lincoln's perspective. To what extent does this interpretation offer a useful framework for understanding historical conflicts rooted in deep moral disagreements?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Abolitionism:** A movement dedicated to ending the practice of slavery.
- **Anti-slavery Sentiment:** A general opposition to the institution of slavery.
- **Colonization Society:** An organization founded in 1817 that aimed to relocate free African Americans from the United States to Africa.
- **Christmas Conference (1784):** A foundational meeting of American Methodists where a resolution against slave ownership was initially adopted.
- **Edwardsians:** Followers of the theological and philosophical ideas of Jonathan Edwards, who, while Edwards himself owned slaves, began to voice concerns against slavery.
- **Public Liberator and Journal of the Times:** An abolitionist newspaper founded by William Lloyd Garrison in 1831 advocating for immediate emancipation.

- **Wesleyan Methodist Church:** A denomination formed in 1843 by Orange Scott due to his opposition to slave ownership within the Methodist Episcopal Church.
- **Methodist Episcopal Church South:** The Southern branch of the Methodist Church that split in 1844, allowing slaveholders to be members.
- **Southern Baptist Convention:** A Baptist denomination formed in 1845 that permitted slave ownership.
- **Presbyterian Church in the USA:** The Northern branch of the Presbyterian Church after it split during the Civil War.
- **Presbyterian Church in the United States:** The Southern branch of the Presbyterian Church after it split during the Civil War.
- **Oxford Movement:** A movement within the Church of England (Anglican Church) in the 19th century that sought to revive Catholic theology and practices, impacting some American Episcopalians.
- **Anglo-Catholic:** A tradition within Anglicanism and Episcopalianism that emphasizes its Catholic heritage and often incorporates more traditional liturgy and practices.
- **African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME):** The first independent black denomination in the United States, founded in 1816 (though the lecture mentions 1814 as the formation of the first church), arising from racial discrimination in the Methodist Church.
- **Bethel Church:** The church for black Methodists in Philadelphia founded by Richard Allen before the formation of the AME denomination.
- **States' Rights:** The belief that individual states have significant autonomy and power independent of the federal government.
- **Divine Retribution:** The belief that God punishes individuals or groups for their wrongdoing.
- **Penitence:** The feeling of sorrow and remorse for sins or wrongdoings.
- **Reconciliation:** The restoration of friendly relations between individuals or groups after conflict.

## 5. FAQs Green, American Christianity, Session 13, Slavery and the Churches, Civil War, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Slavery, the Church, and the Civil War in American Christianity

1. **How did anti-slavery sentiment develop and become institutionalized in American life and culture according to the lecture?** The lecture outlines a chronological progression of anti-slavery and abolitionist sentiments. It began with the Quakers, who as early as 1775 had taken a stance. The Methodists followed in 1784 at their Christmas Conference, deciding that Methodist members could not own slaves. The Edwardsians in the 1770s, though Jonathan Edwards himself owned slaves, began to voice concerns. The establishment of the Colonization Society in 1817 served as a transitional moment, raising awareness of the issue despite its ultimate failure. Finally, the founding of Oberlin College in 1835 as an explicitly abolitionist and co-educational institution marked a significant step. The narrative culminates with William Lloyd Garrison in 1831, who advocated for the immediate abolition of slavery through his journal, "The Liberator," and public speaking, becoming a pivotal but divisive figure in the abolitionist movement.
2. **How did the issue of slavery divide major Protestant denominations in America?** The lecture highlights the significant divisions within the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian denominations over slavery. The Methodists experienced a "gradual creep" of slave ownership among members, leading to Orange Scott forming the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1843, which prohibited slave ownership. In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church split into the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church (which forbade slave ownership) and the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church, South (which allowed it) due to a dispute over a slaveholding bishop. The Baptists also split in 1845, forming the Southern Baptist Convention, which permitted slaveholders as members, in response to disagreement over whether missionaries could own slaves. The Presbyterians divided later, towards the end of the Civil War (around 1864), into the Presbyterian Church in the USA (North) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (South), with the Southern branch allowing slaveholding.

3. **Which denominations did not divide over slavery, and what were the reasons for their unity on this issue?** The Congregationalists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Roman Catholics did not experience a formal North-South split over slavery. The Congregationalists, largely located in the North and heavily in New England, shared a unified anti-slavery sentiment, eliminating the basis for division. The Lutherans, guided by Martin Luther's "two kingdoms" theology separating the spiritual and civic realms, considered slavery a political issue to be decided by the state, allowing individual territorial Lutheran groups to make their own decisions without a denominational split. The Episcopalians, despite being geographically diverse, also allowed local churches to decide on the issue, maintaining unity at the denominational level. The Roman Catholic Church, while officially opposed to slavery under Pope Gregory XVI, adopted a pragmatic approach in America under Archbishop Francis Kenrick, allowing both abolitionists and slaveholders to remain within the Church to maintain unity, with a belief that social legislation would eventually resolve the issue. The Oxford Movement also diverted some Episcopalian attention.
4. **What was William Lloyd Garrison's role in the abolitionist movement, and why was he a controversial figure?** William Lloyd Garrison was a crucial figure in the abolitionist movement, advocating for the immediate and unconditional emancipation of slaves. He founded the abolitionist journal "The Liberator" in 1831 and was a vocal public speaker, including at the African Meeting House in Boston. Garrison's unwavering stance on immediate abolition and his often strong rhetoric, including criticisms of the church and other abolitionists who favored a more gradual approach, made him a divisive figure. While some believed his radicalism was necessary to propel the cause forward, others felt his approach hindered the movement by alienating potential allies.

5. **How did religious allegiance play out during the Civil War in the North and the South?** Religious allegiance during the Civil War was largely determined by geography. Ministers in the North encouraged young men to fight for the freedom of slaves, often interpreting the Bible to support the anti-slavery cause. Conversely, ministers in the South urged young men to defend their way of life, including the right to own slaves, also finding biblical justifications for their position. Both sides prayed for and sang about victory, illustrating the deep intertwining of religious belief and regional identity. For example, Southerners prayed for God to be on their side and defeat the "ruthless foe" (Northern troops), while northerners sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," viewing their cause as divinely sanctioned to make men free.
6. **What were the different interpretations of the Civil War in the North and the South after the conflict?** After the war, the South interpreted the conflict as malicious interference by the North in their rights, viewing the war as an act of Northern aggression and hoping for divine retribution against their oppressors. The North, on the other hand, saw the war as a necessary action to preserve the union and eradicate the injustice of slavery, interpreting their victory as divine retribution against the South for its sins. Northerners often viewed the South as needing evangelization due to their "wrong" beliefs, a sentiment that was resented in the South. The South also resented the North's "federalist cause" and perceived infringement on states' rights regarding slavery.
7. **What was the more sophisticated interpretation of the Civil War, exemplified by Abraham Lincoln, and what principles underpinned it?** Abraham Lincoln offered a more nuanced interpretation of the Civil War, emphasizing three key principles: (1) everyone should be less confident in knowing God's purposes, acknowledging the potential for hidden or complex divine will; (2) everyone should recognize the ambiguity and messiness of historical processes, avoiding simplistic narratives; and (3) everyone should question the moral purity of their own side, fostering humility and self-reflection. Lincoln believed that by embracing these principles, the Civil War could become a meaningful experience for the entire American people, leading to repentance, reconciliation, and national regeneration rather than just victory for one side and defeat for the other.

8. **What were the origins and early development of the Black Church in America, particularly within Methodism, as discussed in the lecture?** The first black church within Methodism was the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, formed in Philadelphia in 1814. This occurred due to significant friction between black and white Methodists in Philadelphia, driven by issues of slavery and racial prejudice. Richard Allen, a pivotal figure, founded the AME Church and became its first bishop. Prior to this, he had established Bethel Church in Philadelphia as a place of worship for black Methodists within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Francis Asbury, a significant figure in early Methodism, ordained Richard Allen, highlighting the importance of this emerging black denomination. The AME Church experienced substantial growth, from approximately 22,000 members in 1860 to nearly 500,000 by 1896. It played a crucial role in the black community, establishing the first black magazine and the first university for African Americans, demonstrating its significant social and spiritual impact.