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The remarkable book that contributed to the downfall of slavery in America

THE CRISIS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

A Critical Examination of the Economic and Moral Failures of a Slave-Holding Society

by Hinton Rowan Helper

The Southern protest par excellence . . ., the work of Hinton Rowan Helper of North Carolina. . . — The Cambridge History of English and American Literature

The economical bearing and results of slave labor, as compared with free labor, are here exhibited with an amplitude and precision which we have not seen approached elsewhere — North American Review

Although Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin is considered to be the book that most motivated a nation against slavery, it was not a work of fiction, but rather a sociological treatise that perhaps should take that honor. Hinton Rowan Helper, a slaveholder's son, wrote a well-researched and persuasive indictment of slavery, which not only became widely known but also had a major impact on American politics. In fact, it was instrumental in helping Abraham Lincoln win the Presidential election of 1860. However, this work, **THE CRISIS OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH** (Quanterness Press), is complex, and it would be a mistake to look at it solely as anti-slavery propaganda. Helper, as other authors, argued that the basic injustices within the institution of slavery were a heinous offence against Christian principles. Yet, he went much further than others to document the harm that was actually being done to society by this institution. For example, Helper claimed that slavery was keeping the South backwards agriculturally and industrially, that it was destroying land prices, and hindering railroad building. In addition, he brought much needed attention to key cultural aspects that were usually ignored, such as the dependence of Southerners on the products of Northern industry, a lack of patriotism amongst the Southern elite, and the inability of the illiterate poor whites of the South to express their desires and aims.

Thus, because of this wide-ranging analysis, based not only on moral principles, but economic factors, **THE CRISIS OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH** was the most explosive indictment of slavery, calling for an end to slavery on the grounds that the institution had made the South commercially and socially stagnant. Ultimately, Helper's larger goal was to provoke a type of socialist revolution, and the emancipation of slaves was only one aspect of this. It is clear from his writing, that although Helper was sympathetic to the plight of blacks, he empathized most with the downtrodden whites of the South. Interestingly, he concludes that the South's economic and social ills should not be blamed on the North, but on a small group of very powerful white slaveholders, who were manipulating society for their own purposes. Many however rejected the idea of non-slaveholders ostracizing the wealthy in order to overturn slavery, but then America was slow to understand the demands of the socialist revolution that people like Helper were promoting. He wanted people in the south opposed to slavery to shun those who supported it, thereby inducing a schism. The author was a son of the South, who knew the people well, their temperament, attitudes and weaknesses, and such a rebellion might very well have taken hold, without appropriate political support and preparation.

In his book, Helper puts forward a massive amount of detailed statistics, comparing the progressive conditions and prosperity of the North versus the relatively primitive environment of the South to prove his case. The areas covered include: quantity and value of the agricultural products; wealth, revenue, and expenditures of the States; value of lands in the free and in the slave States; numbers of slaveholders in the United States; tonnage, exports, and imports; miles of canals and railroads in operation; public

schools; newspapers and periodicals; numbers of illiterate white adults; patents issued on new inventions; value of church property; the wealth and population of New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Boston, St. Louis, Brooklyn, Charleston, Cincinnati, Louisville, Chicago, Richmond, Providence, Norfolk, Buffalo, Savannah, New Bedford, Wilmington. He defends the founding fathers, and cites their statements decrying slavery; encourages non slave holding whites in South to not socialise with those who do; he claims that a few hard liners keep slavery going. He quotes such American authorities such as Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Henry, Randolph, Clay, Benton, Mason, Leigh, Marshall, Bolling, Chandler, Summers, Preston, Fremont, Blair, Maury, Franklin, Hamilton, Jay, Adams, Webster, Clinton, Warren, Garrison, Greeley, Seward, and Sumner. He also quotes many political and religious authorities of other nations, such as Pope Gregory XVI, Pope Leo X, Mansfield, Locke, Pitt, Fox, Shakespeare, Cowper, Milton, Johnson, Price, Coke, Hampden, Harrington, Fortescue, Brougham, Lafayette, Montesquieu, Louis X, Buffon, Rousseau, Brissot, Grotius, Goethe, Luther, Cicero, Lactantius, Socrates, Aristotle, Polybius, and Plato.

THE CRISIS OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH provides a much-needed new perspective on the condition of America on the eve of the Civil War, and because of its extensive research and analysis into all areas of society, this book will be of great value to students and scholars.

Hinton Rowan Helper (1829-1909) was born and raised in North Carolina, his father dying only a year after his birth. His father owned a few slaves, working them on a small farm. After a wasted three years in California during the "gold rush" he apparently contemplated a work that would address the economic problems in his own part of the country, the South. The great success of his book, originally entitled *The Impending Crisis of the South*, in rallying the anti-slavery put Helper in contact with influential men, and as a result of this he was able to secure the office of consul at Buenos Aires, Argentine Republic, in 1861, holding it for six years. He also attempted to implement a grand scheme to have one great railway linking North, Central and South America, running from Hudson's Bay to Cape Horn. This "Three Americas Railway" concept achieved some interest, but Helper lost much of his own money campaigning for it. He went on to live in South America, where he married. However, because of his later writings, his erstwhile supporters came to regard his post-war views with distaste, and could not allow themselves to be associated with Helper's program of nativism.

Paul Dennis Sporer (editor) is the author of *The Dimensions of Companionship; Liberating Love; The Concept of Family;* and *Equal but Different.* He has also served as editor on more than 30 culturally and historically significant books, including *Painting Explained*, by Thomas Gullick; *Is Secession Treason?*, by Albert Bledsoe; *The Heart of Aryavarta*, by Lawrence Dundas; *Beauty and Art*; by Aldam Heaton; *The French at Home*, by Albert Rhodes; *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, by Peter Randolph; *Newer Ideals of Peace,* by Jane Addams; *Views of Old Europe*, by Bayard Taylor; *Gentle Measures*, by Jacob Abbott; *Parental Influences*, William Bacon; *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Moton; *The New Birth*, by Austin Phelps; *Tupelo*, by John Hill Aughey; *An Incident of Travel*, Arthur Jerome Eddy; *End of an Era*, by John Sergeant Wise; *The Missionary*, by Samuel Mazzuchelli; *Half a Century*, by Jane Swisshelm; *Born Three Times*, by Thomas L. Johnson; *Dark Hollow*, by Anna Katharine Green; and *1492: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, by Mary Johnston.

For further information about **THE CRISIS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH**, or to arrange an interview with the editor, please contact Cassandra Foxton, inform_at_anzapublishing.com. The publisher's website address is AnzaPublishing.com.

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THE CRISIS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH, by Hinton Rowan Helpter, Paul Dennis Sporer (Editor)
Revised and enhanced new edition, with new index and preface
Pub. Date: 2007; Pages: 372; ISBN: 1-932490-36-1 (hc), Price: $29.95