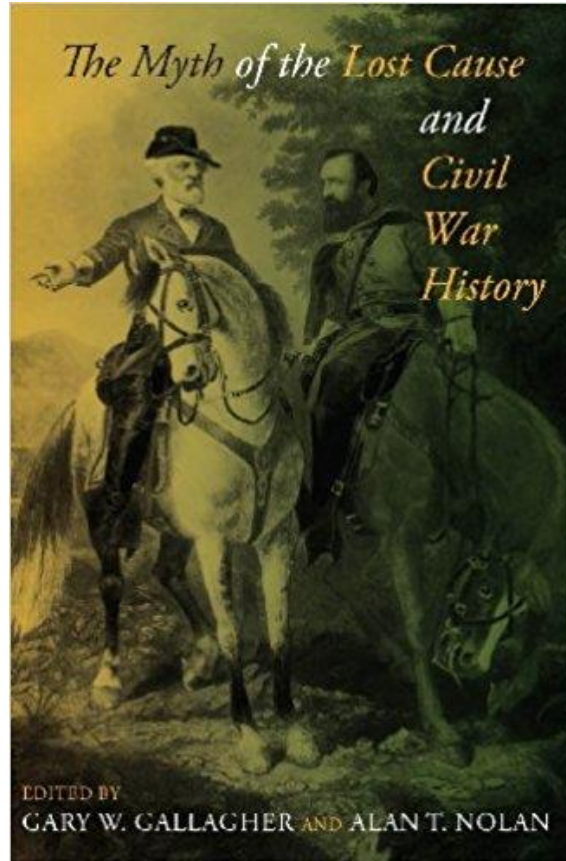


Don't blame Jesus Christ or Christianity for the Myths of the Lost Cause



In previous articles, I outlined ten socio-economic-politico (SEP) hijackings of Christianity: (1) by Rome/Constantine (313), (2) by the crusades (1100-1300), (3) by the inquisitions (1231-1834), (4) by colonialism/imperialism (1400-1800), (5) by the antebellum South in America (1650-1863), (6) by reconstruction (1863-1877), (7) by Jim Crow South (1877-1960), (8) by Nazi Germany (1930-1940), (9) by consumer/prosperity Gospel (1950-2018), and (10) by modern political Christianity on the Right and the Left (1950-2018).

There is one thing in common in all these hijackings: some form of prosperity gospel. The purity of the Person of Jesus Christ and the doctrines of Jesus Christ were bastardized in one way or another in each period because of some material gain—social, economic, and/or political—which is antithetical to everything that Christ stood for, taught, and gave His life for.

In the last two articles, I touched on (5) above. I noted that although Southerners in antebellum America were Bible-believers, their basic ethics were taken from Graeco-Roman culture. A careful look at the ethics in the New Testament versus the ethics of the Greeks and Romans makes this a painful and undeniable reality.

Just so there is no misunderstanding: I love the South. I was born and raised in the South. I love the people of the South. Moreover, I have nothing against antebellum South or even the

Confederate flag. I have no problem with Southerners being proud of the South and honoring those who died in the American Civil War. I believe there were great believers in the South who owned slaves and fought honorable for the state and confederacy. I do not even mind if they make the South and the Southern way of life their civic religion.

Like any other true disciple of Christ, we should love our country and our state, but Christ and His Truth must always take precedence. I love my country, but I do not treat it like a civil religion to be worshipped and defended at all costs. I believe we live in the Greatest Republic in history, but we should never idolize it.

However, what I do have a big problem with is the South's attempt to equate its culture and causes with the ways of Jesus Christ. In the last article, I noted that the essence of the antebellum Southern culture was more Graeco-Roman than Christian. This was not a conscious effort. No Southerner consciously made the goal of his life to have a Christian veneer with a Graeco-Roman essence and mindset. Many Confederates thought they were following the Lord Jesus Christ in their stoicism and race-based slavery. Just like Christians in the other nine periods above, they were hijacked by their culture and mammon. If one wants to cast blame, that blame should be on the Enlightenment attitude from Europe (like deism) rather than Christianity and the ethics of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this article, my concern goes from cultural corruptions of Christ and Christianity to theological corruptions. The theological corruption that I have in mind is called the theology of the Lost Cause that was developed in the years after the Civil War. The attached picture is an excellent peer-reviewed book that deals with the myths of the theological teachings of the Lost Cause.

In sum, the theology of the Lost Cause stated that the South was right in its position before and during the Civil War and even though it suffered great political and military defeat, this defeat was not the judgment of God on its position on slavery and the racial superiority of whites over blacks.

Instead, the defeat of the South was God's purification of the Southern Cause. Through trial by fire, Southern society was being shown to be the most pure and righteous society on Earth. Moreover, it was contended that all that the South stood for would eventually win out over those damn Yankees, liberals, race-mixers, and God-haters. The South would maintain a separate cultural identity after the end of the Civil War in 1865.

The Lost Cause was nothing less than the linking of two profound human forces: Christianity with Southern culture. This mixing of Christianity with Southern Culture and ethics became what is known as a Southern civil religion under the banner of Christianity. The net effect of this was to tie together Christian churches and Southern antebellum culture.

The Southern churches gave the South the Divine Mandate for both slavery and secession and assisted in picking up the pieces after the shattering defeat of the Civil War. Key to making this work was to cast history into the propaganda that the Civil War was not really about slavery. In the next article I will demonstrate that while Abraham Lincoln was not an abolitionist, the

essence of every cause that caused the War was slavery indeed. This is an incontrovertible fact that fears no contradiction.

It is quite amazing how we believers can justify our thoughts and activities by the circumstances of life rather than being honest with God and the Word of God. In antebellum South, they “knew” the great prosperity was vindication from God of the goodness of race-based slavery. When they were defeated by the North, they “knew” God was purifying them as the most pure and righteous society on Earth. God help us all!

In His Matchless Grace,

Pastor Don Hargrove