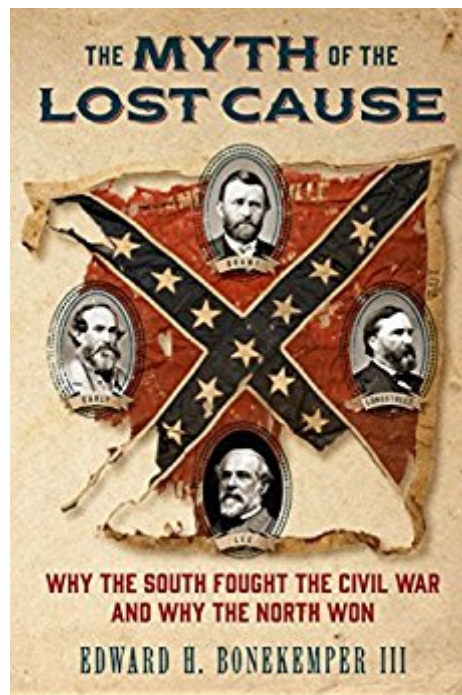




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# The Myth Of The Lost Cause: Why The South Fought The Civil War And Why The North Won



## Synopsis

The former Confederate states have continually mythologized the South's defeat to the North, depicting the Civil War as unnecessary, or as a fight over states' Constitutional rights, or as a David v. Goliath struggle in which the North waged "total war" over an underdog South. In *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, historian Edward Bonekemper deconstructs this multi-faceted myth, revealing the truth about the war that nearly tore the nation apart 150 years ago.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Good review of a tragedy.

Recipient loved this book

A July 5th Washington Post article this year quoted Patricia Hardy, a member of the State Board of Education in Texas, as stating that slavery was a "side issue to the Civil War. There would be those who would say the reason for the Civil War was over slavery. No. It was over

states' rights. Ms. Hardy should read Ed Bonekemper's latest book, "The Myth of the Lost Cause." In this, his sixth Civil War book, which is perhaps his finest, Mr. Bonekemper uses his gifts as both an historian and a lawyer to shred revisionist history that has tried to sanitize the reasons Southern states seceded from the Union. Mr. Bonekemper's research is thorough; his arguments are compelling. The high percentage of slaves compared with the total population in the seceding states (57 percent in South Carolina) and the high percentage of slave-holding families in those states (49 percent in Mississippi) are strong indicators of the importance of slavery in the decisions of these states to leave the Union. The reader is provided with the actual language from the declarations at the state secession conventions. Mississippi got right to the point: "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery." At that time, the issue of states' rights was not on the agenda of the seceding states; Southerners were dissatisfied instead with the Northern exercise of their states' rights

by failing to return fugitive slaves in accordance with the Constitution and Federal law! Additionally, the South's rejection of the use of slaves as soldiers and the South's failure to promise to end slavery to gain the diplomatic support of Britain and France demonstrated that the independence of the Confederacy was a lessor priority than the preservation of slavery. It is clear that the only right the Southern states were interested in was the right to maintain slavery. I agree with one reviewer's assessment that the first 95 pages alone are worth the price of the book. After refuting the states' rights myth, the author refutes other popularly held beliefs: (1) the Confederacy had no chance to win the war; (2) Robert E. Lee was one of history's greatest generals; (3) General Longstreet, not Lee, was responsible for the Confederacy's loss at Gettysburg; (4) Ulysses S. Grant was a "butcher" who won the war with superior numbers and brutality; and (5) the North won because it waged total war against the South. Mr. Bonekemper explains that the allegation that the North won by waging total war is a myth, because it fails to distinguish between "hard war," which involves the destruction of enemy armies and property, and "total war," which adds the deliberate and systematic killing and rape of civilians. As the author demonstrates, unlimited, large-scale attacks on civilians are absent from the Civil War. There are two reviewers who inexplicably gave this extraordinary book only one star. One reviewer said that the book was intentionally deceptive, but he failed to say in what way. He further claimed that the author omitted important facts, but he failed to clarify what

these were. It is questionable whether this reviewer even read the book, and I find his unsupported conclusions to be a disservice to potential readers. Although the second one-star reviewer did provide specific objections, they were either irrelevant to the author's points or they were factually incorrect. The reviewer states that only 10 percent of whites were wealthy enough to own slaves, even though a chart is provided showing that the percentage of slave-owning families in the 11 states that seceded ranged from 25 to 49, with the average being 31. Moreover, Mr. Bonekemper points out that fear of Negro equality by Southern whites who were not slave owners helped to reinforce the institution of slavery. This is an exceptional book, well written and meticulously researched, and should be read by all who want to truly understand the history of the Civil War. I challenge the State Board of Education in Texas to make "The Myth of the Lost Cause" part of its curriculum.

Historian Edward Bonekemper III examines in *The Myth of the Lost Causes* the postwar arguments by former Confederates to justify secession from the Union, slavery, fighting the Civil War and their accepted history even in their defeat. It was the contention of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, General Robert Lee, and other Southern officers during and after the fighting that secession did not have anything to do with slavery but was all about States' Rights. This excellent historian and former attorney explores detailed research from the past one hundred and fifty years that shows that the War Between the States had everything to do with slavery. He was able to present important documents from seceding Southern states that all use the term slavery as the reason for leaving the Union. Other aspects of the legend include the romanticism of slavery, the adulation of Robert E. Lee and vilification of Ulysses S. Grant, the assertion that the South had no opportunity of winning the war, impugning James Longstreet for losing the Battle of Gettysburg, and condemning the North for waging hard war. This volume scrutinized and successfully refutes these charges. The winners of wars normally write the history; however, Southerners spent three decades after the end of the Civil War in 1865 crafting the Lost Cause led by the efforts of Confederate General Jubal Early and William Pendleton and Reverend J. William Jones. These Confederate supporters shaped a memory that placed their wartime service and loss in the greatest possible light. Their main concern was sanitizing the history of the war itself. Bonekemper supports the allegation that white Americans enforced their view of racial supremacy following Reconstruction during the Jim Crow era by demeaning African Americans, imposing desegregation that was upheld by the Supreme Court Decision of 1896; *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, prevented most

blacks from voting, and lynched thousands of individuals throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. This Civil War scholar and successful author vigorously argues that the Myth and its long term effects on our understanding of historical and societal questions are still important to academics and students in 2016. Additionally, the writer proclaims that an institution that made so much money and represented such a great percentage of planter life's prosperity was unlikely to disappear without some outside coercion. Bonekemper weaves together a fascinating tapestry of knowledge, a thought provoking account, groundbreaking analysis, and noted historian's insights into the Lost Cause. He effectively provides a point by point repudiation of the important components of the Southern mythology that deepens our understanding of the South's rationale for fighting the Civil War and why its nation collapsed in 1865. A major addition to the study of Robert E. Lee, the Civil War and the Confederate States of America's effort to become a sovereign nation. This is a top-notch piece of scholarship that should enrich our national debates for decades to come. Why The South Fought The Civil War and Why The North Won is a well written treatment, thoroughly researched utilizing numerous primary and secondary sources, a good read, engaging and a positive addition to the literature. Regillery History has published a title that includes useful notes, a helpful bibliography and an index but no photographs or maps. This book will change reader's awareness of the main issues during the 1860 Presidential Election, why compromise did not prevent the conflict, how the Civil War was misrepresented since 1865 and whether slaves fought for the Confederacy. With extensive supporting evidence supporting Bonekemper's non-traditional interpretations on several critical questions, he separates truth from folklore. In conclusion, I recommend this title.

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