

**Volume 17**

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**A House Divided (22): Slavery: That Peculiar Institution – I**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In the history of the American Republic, there is nothing that compares to slavery. It divided the infant nation, at least in part provoked and sustained the greatest war in U.S. history, philosophically poisoned the**

**national charter, retarded the economic development of one of great America's regions and probably skewed that of all others, and dominated the national conversation for seven decades. It also complicated and excavated one of the important fault lines running through the American experience: the great debate over federal and state power.**

**On most questions, the South, more conservative, rural, agricultural, with a smaller, less diverse population, favored power closer to the local level, states' rights and a weak federal government. The North, more urban, industrial, with a larger, more diverse population, favored a stronger, interventionist federal government.**

**This pattern proved true over and over save on the question of slavery. Southerners wanted a weak federal government except when it imperiled their rights of slave ownership and protection for their human property.**

**The problem was the Constitution itself which clearly codified this peculiar institution, but did not provide a means of its protection. Congress, dominated by the South beginning in 1793, began to pass a series of ever increasingly stringent laws to help slave owners hold onto their chattel. Next time: a matter of honor.**

**In Richmond Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.**



## Resources

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