

## **WHAT CAUSED THE CIVIL WAR?**

### **A. Long term issues:**

1. The Missouri Compromise (1820)
2. The abolitionist movement (1830s+)
3. The Liberty Party and political abolitionism (1840-48)
4. The Wilmot Proviso (1846)
5. Free Soil Party (1848+)

### **B. Near term issues:**

1. The Compromise of 1850
2. Fugitive Slave Act of 1851 and reactions to it
3. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)
4. Southern responses to antislavery critiques:
  - i. DeBow's "economic vassalage" theme, 1852
  - ii. George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South* (1854)
  - iii. James Hammond's "King Cotton"/"mudsill" theme, 1858
5. Southern expansionists
  - i. Manifest Destiny and "Young America" movement within the Democratic Party, 1852
  - ii. Ostend Manifesto, 1854
6. Pacific Railroad and Kansas-Nebraska debates, 1852-54
7. The Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) and civil war in Kansas
8. The Sumner-Brooks affair, May 1856
9. Formation of the Republican Party and the elections of 1854 and 1856
10. The Dred Scott decision, 1857
11. The Lincoln-Douglas debates, 1858
12. Tariff debates in Congress, 1858
13. William Seward's "irrepressible conflict" speech (1858), Lincoln's "house divided/slave conspiracy" speech (1858), and the intensifying war of words
14. John Brown's raid on the Harpers Ferry Arsenal, Oct. 1859
15. The election of 1860: Lincoln/Douglas/Bredkinridge/Bell
16. The lower South secedes, led by South Carolina (Dec. 20, 1860)  
But the upper South (Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas) remains in the Union until after the fall of Fort Sumter (April 1861)  
Other slave states that don't join the Confederacy: Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri

**C. *The Disruption of American Democracy*** [cf. Roy F. Nichols thesis]

**D. *Conclusions: What caused the Civil War?***

[here I draw heavily on Charles Dew's recent book, *Apostles of Disunion* (2001)]

1. Yankee aggression/Southern resentment of its "vassalage" to the North?
2. Abolitionism and Republican opposition to the expansion of slavery?
3. Lincoln's election?
4. States rights?
5. Slavery and race as "absolutely critical elements in the coming of the war"  
(Dew thesis, p. 81)
6. Multiple factors: slavery, yes, but also complex economic and cultural differences
7. The growing "psychology of crisis" [cf. John B. Frantz]