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Reputation and history| Andrew Johnson's historiographical rise and fall

Mary Ruth Lenihan
The University of Montana

REPUTATION AND HISTORY:

ANDREW JOHNSON'S HISTORIOGRAPHICAL RISE AND FALL

By

Mary Ruth Logan Lenihan

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Few American political figures have inspired more antipathy than Andrew Johnson. A Democrat and a Southerner, he assumed the presidency upon Lincoln's death and became the leader of a Republican administration. Rebuilding the nation after the bitter and divisive Civil War proved difficult. Johnson's clashes with the Republicans in Congress led to his impeachment, the ultimate political dishonor.

The Civil War era has long been a focus of historical attention in the United States. Andrew Johnson's tenure has been studied more frequently, and has generated more scholarly works, than have the terms of many other presidents. Because the Civil War and Reconstruction were events that inspired exceptionally strong feelings, historians' views of the era have been well defined. Rarely have their conclusions about the epoch, or Andrew Johnson, been ambivalent.

Andrew Johnson's historiographical reputation has been tied inversely to scholars' views of so-called Radical Reconstruction. In the nineteenth century, as long as Radical Reconstruction was viewed favorably, Johnson was an anathema. By the turn of the twentieth century, the nation's racial and political climate led scholars to denounce Radical Reconstruction. Scholars accepted Johnson's policy but blamed him for causing the divisiveness that led to the ascendancy of the Radical plan. Starting in the mid-1920s, when Reconstruction racial and economic policies were viewed with particular disfavor, Johnson emerged the valiant hero who had bravely withstood the evil Radicals. By 1960, as historians changed their view of the Radicals and Radical Reconstruction, Johnson's reputation fell once again.

Andrew Johnson's historical reputation is a microcosm of twentieth century American Civil War and Reconstruction historiography. A look at it traces changes in the profession, the discovery and use of new evidence, and changes in historical fashion. Andrew Johnson is so strongly linked to one of the most controversial periods in our history that his reputation may never be finally put to rest.

"Reputation is an idle and most false imposition,

oft got without merit and lost without deserving."

William Shakespeare
Othello, 1604

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CHAPTER I

THE MAN AND HIS NINETEENTH CENTURY CRITICS

Few presidents in our history have inspired more antipathy than has Andrew Johnson. Some might say he was the epitome of the political mistake: the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

His national political career did not begin that way. A Democrat and a Southerner, Johnson was chosen to be Lincoln's running mate in 1864 because Republican leaders felt he might inspire pro-Union support in the southern border states. Lincoln's assassination quickly changed Johnson's status from political expedient to political mistake. Distrusted by the ruling Republicans, disliked by old-guard Southerners, he found himself opposed at almost every move. While many of his Reconstruction policies were, in fact, continuations of Lincoln's plans, support for Lincoln was not transferred to him. Instead, in contrast to the martyred Lincoln, Johnson stands alone in American history as the one president who was impeached, although not convicted.

A look at Johnson's twentieth century historiographical treatment must begin with a brief look at the man himself and the views of his nineteenth century contemporaries. Probably it is safe to agree with historian Eric McKitrick that "no truly satisfactory biography of Andrew

Johnson has ever been written."[1] His reputation is so tied to Reconstruction, and historians' views of him so tied to the historical assessment of Reconstruction, black suffrage, and impeachment, that there is no portrait of the "real" man. Much biography is history, of course, but there usually are differences between the two. This is not the case with Andrew Johnson. Even the simplest "facts" concerning his personality have been interpreted in a way consistent with historians' view of the much larger issues of Reconstruction and race.

The simple biographical facts are these: Johnson was born December 29, 1808, in Raleigh, North Carolina. His parents were very poor and his early life was one of unmitigated poverty. The elder Johnson died when Andrew was three years old. He had almost no formal education. At age fourteen he was apprenticed to a tailor. In 1826, the family moved to Greeneville, Tennessee, where a year later Johnson opened a tailor shop and married Eliza McCardle.

Most of the historians writing about him agree that Johnson was driven to overcome the deficiencies of his lack of education and his early poverty.[2] He learned to read as a teenager, but did not learn to write until his wife taught him. Through hard work, Johnson eventually

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[1]Eric L. McKitrick, ed., Andrew Johnson: A Profile (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), p. viii.

[2]See, for example, a contemporary view, Oliver P. Temple, Notable Men of Tennessee from 1833 to 1875: Their Times and Their Contemporaries (New York: Cosmopolitan Press, 1912), p. 466; an early twentieth century view, James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850, 9 vols., (New York: Macmillan, 1893-1922), 6:2-3; a "laudatory" view, Robert W. Winston, Andrew Johnson, Plebian and Patriot (New York: Henry Holt, 1928), p. 38; a revisionist view, Eric L. McKitrick, "Andrew Johnson, Outsider" in McKitrick, Profile, p. 70; and a more recent view, Michael Les Benedict, The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), p. 3.

acquired a home, a new shop, and eventually slaves and other property.

He joined a debating society and cultivated the interest of local political organizations. One of the founders of the Democratic party in Greeneville, he was elected a town alderman in 1829. After that his political fortunes rose. In 1835, after serving as mayor, he was elected to the state legislature, then to the state senate in 1841, and to Congress in 1843. By 1853 he was Tennessee's governor. In 1857 Johnson was elected to the U.S. Senate, a position he held when Tennessee seceded from the Union in 1861.

As most any U.S. history text shows, Johnson, a staunch Unionist, was asked by Lincoln to become military governor of Tennessee. In 1864, his pro-Union stance and his work in Tennessee brought him to the attention of the Republican campaign strategists who were searching for Lincoln's vice-presidential running mate. Upon Lincoln's death April 15, 1865, Andrew Johnson became the seventeenth president of the United States.

Events followed quickly thereafter. Regularly vetoing civil rights bills and other legislation introduced by Republicans, Johnson soon alienated the party that had nominated him. The impasse between Johnson and Congress led to the enactment of the Reconstruction Acts and other legislation. Then, for alleged violation of the Tenure of Office Act, Johnson was impeached by the House of Representatives on February 24, 1868. He was acquitted in the Senate by the margin of one vote.

After finishing his term as president, Johnson returned to Tennessee. In 1875, he was once again elected to the U.S. Senate but he

died on July 31 after participating in only one session.[3]

From the time Johnson left office until the turn of the century, his historiographic treatment was not really historiographic at all. Most of the early writing about him consisted of first-person accounts of his contemporaries rather than scholarly works. Since many of these diaries, letters, memoirs, and so on were written by Northerners, it's not surprising that most of them are generally unsympathetic. While almost none of these accounts could be termed "history" in the modern sense, their portrayals of Johnson foreshadowed arguments that would be developed more fully by twentieth century historians.

Henry Wilson was one of the loudest Johnson critics during the immediate post-war era. Wilson had been vice president during U. S. Grant's second term. In works published both before and after Johnson's death, Wilson described President Johnson's policy as reactionary and charged that Johnson had denied the freedmen the right to vote. This was hardly a surprising view, coming as it did from a Radical apologist.[4]

James G. Blaine, Republican Congressman, published his memoirs in the mid-1880s. Like Wilson, Blaine castigated Johnson for his failure to extend political and civil rights to blacks. He also blamed Johnson for the South's post-war "relapse" into the political control of former

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[3]For a quick look at Johnson's life, see the source, of this chronology, the volume on Johnson in Oceana Publications series on U.S. presidents: John W. Dickinson, Andrew Johnson 1808-1875; Chronology--Documents--Bibliographical Aids (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1970

[4]Henry Wilson, "Edwin M. Stanton," Atlantic Monthly, February 1870, pp. 234-46; and History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America, 3 vols., (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1872-1877), 3: 578, 597-99, 733.

Confederates.[5] Both Wilson and Blaine claimed Johnson was a drunkard, a view perpetuated by many of Johnson's early twentieth century critics. While Wilson claimed Johnson was dishonest and treacherous, Blaine's comments centered more on the president's political blunders.[6]

Also in keeping with the tone of these accounts were those of George Boutwell and Carl Schurz. Boutwell had served as one of the managers of the impeachment trial, and in an 1885 article he charged that the president was treacherous, stubborn, and indecisive.[7] Schurz, a German immigrant, Civil War hero, and statesman, called Johnson "the worst imaginable" man for the post-War presidency, both in terms of his mental prowess (or lack thereof) and his resistance to granting blacks their civil rights.[8]

The only real defender of Johnson was a member of his cabinet, Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch, but his defense was tempered by criticism. McCulloch maintained that Johnson was a man of honesty and devotion to the Union. However, he also claimed that Johnson's effectiveness was impaired by bad political judgment and a propensity to offend.[9]

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[5]James G. Blaine, Twenty Years in Congress from Lincoln to Garfield, 2 vols., (Norwich, CT: Henry Bill, 1884-86), 2:306, 376-77.

[6]Wilson, History, p. 733; and Blaine, Twenty Years, 2:239, 267, 305-06, 377.

[7]George S. Boutwell, "Johnson's Plot and Motives," North American Review 41 (December 1885):576.

[8]Frederick Bancroft, ed., Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz 6 vols., (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 4:270.

[9]Hugh McCulloch, Men and Measures of Half a Century (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), pp. 88, 374-94.

As the 1880s progressed, works appeared that were written by more detached observers of the political scene. Henry Cabot Lodge, a teenager during the Johnson presidency, wrote an article on William H. Seward, Lincoln's and Johnson's secretary of state. Lodge characterized Johnson as tactless and offensive, but honest and patriotic. He suggested that Johnson was only trying to carry out Lincoln's Reconstruction policy, but that his political tactlessness was his undoing. This was essentially the same argument that would be presented in the early years of the twentieth century.[10]

Writers of history also contributed more detached views of Andrew Johnson in this early period. Jacob Harris Potter, writing on the post-war years, blamed Johnson for political blunders and for exceeding his authority in instituting a Reconstruction plan.[11] This criticism, though, was directed more at the president's political style than at his character. (Earlier critics had attacked Johnson's character.) George Cary Eggleston claimed Johnson was honest and intelligent, but fell short of evaluating his Reconstruction policy.[12]

Another view was that of Charles Tuckerman. Published in 1888, his article was based on an interview with Johnson while he was president. Tuckerman asserted that the president had the interests of the whole country at heart "but that his cause was 'impolitic or

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[10]Henry Cabot Lodge, "William H. Seward," Atlantic Monthly, May 1884, pp. 682, 700.

[11]Jacob Harris Potter, "Reconstruction," Magazine of American History 20 (September 1888):207-08.

[12]George Cary Eggleston, "Our Twenty-One Presidents," Magazine of American History, March 1884, p. 204.

misguided.'" Tuckerman quoted an anonymous Southerner who commented about Johnson during Reconstruction: "'The mistake is that he is several years in advance of the times. We at the South are not yet repentant; but Johnson don't see it. That's what's the matter.'"[13] Tuckerman seemed to be suggesting that Johnson's failures were not totally his fault. This idea would be resurrected later.

In the 1890s, two more first-person accounts appeared. They echoed the views found in the earlier first-person accounts. John Sherman, who had voted to convict at the impeachment trial, wrote that Johnson's Reconstruction policy was probably wise, but that his behavior was not.[14] Benjamin Butler, the chief manager of the impeachment proceedings, could hardly have been expected to view Andrew Johnson favorably. In his opinion, the president was definitely guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors."[15]

History as a professional discipline was in its infancy in the 1890s. Works by three historians rounded out the nineteenth century views. Charles E. Chadsey's The Struggle Between President Johnson and Congress over Reconstruction appeared in 1896. Unlike most Johnson biographers and critics, he hesitated to judge either the president or his Reconstruction program. He admitted that Johnson had made political mistakes, but he tempered his analysis of Johnson by pointing out that

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[13]Charles K. Tuckerman, "Personal Recollections of President Johnson," Magazine of American History, July 1888, pp. 41-42.

[14]John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate, and Cabinet 2 vols., (Chicago: Werner, 1895), 1:361, 364.

[15]Benjamin F. Butler, Butler's Book (Boston: A. M. Thayer, 1892), p. 927.

the "spirit of compromise" was not evident in either Johnson's or the Radicals' behavior. In writing this, Chadsey seemed almost modern in his approach.[16]

William A. Dunning, whose work will be covered in greater detail later, wrote several essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction that appeared during the 1880s and the 1890s. These were collected and published in 1897. In general, Dunning approved Johnson's Reconstruction plan, but felt the president's bad judgment brought about its defeat by driving those with moderate views to side with the Radicals.[17]

One of the first scholarly investigators of the period, James Walter Fertig, wrote his doctoral dissertation about Tennessee during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Fertig portrayed Johnson sympathetically, but he admitted that the president's temperament hurt his own cause. Most of the responsibility for the failure of Johnson's plan, though, was attributed to Congress and congressional resistance to working with a Southerner.[18]

The early years of Andrew Johnson's historiographical treatment, then, were characterized by two major schools of thought. One, evidenced by most of the first-person accounts and reminiscences, echoed the political views of their Republican authors: that Johnson was an unwise and dishonest man following an unwise and unjust policy. The other,

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[16]Charles Chadsey, The Struggle Between President Johnson and Congress over Reconstruction (New York: MacMillan, 1897), p. 126.

[17]William A. Dunning, Essays in the Civil War and Reconstruction, 4th ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1931), p. 78.

[18]James Walter Fertig, "The Secession and Reconstruction of Tennessee" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1898), p. 78.

which surfaced in the 1880s, portrayed the president as a patriotic and well-meaning man who had a justifiable and even correct policy, but whose character defects and political ineptness doomed his ability to implement a lenient plan to restore the Union.

Even this more sympathetic view at heart accepted a basic Republican view, that the problems of Reconstruction were Johnson's fault. But the more sympathetic view also showed how times had changed. Political events of the late 1870s, particularly the Compromise of 1877, which restored the South to the rule of southern conservatives, suggested that Radical Reconstruction was not the best plan. If that was the case, then perhaps Andrew Johnson, or at least his policies, were not so bad after all.

CHAPTER II

1900-1926: HIS POLICIES WERE WISE BUT HIS LEADERSHIP ABYSMAL

The works about Andrew Johnson written in the early part of this century differed from those of the nineteenth century primarily by the type of writing rather than by a marked change in attitude. Johnson's contemporaries had been largely unfavorable, both in terms of his personality and his abilities as a political leader. The early twentieth century was marked by the more detached, scholarly accounts of professional historians. However, while their methodology may have been different, their attitudes were somewhat similar to those of nineteenth century writers; for the most part Andrew Johnson was still viewed unsympathetically as a man ill-equipped for the presidency.

Setting the tone for this period was one of the era's most important and influential historians, James Ford Rhodes. His multi-volume History of the United States was published beginning in 1900.

The volume concerning the Johnson administration appeared in 1907. One need only look at the chapter subheadings to understand Rhodes's view of Johnson: "Johnson's vindictiveness," "Johnson's mistake," "Johnson's obstinacy," "Johnson's enmity," "Johnson's folly," and "Johnson's animosity." The very first paragraph set forth the thesis to follow, that for the successful reunification of the nation, "a wise

constructor and moderator was needed." No man, said Rhodes, "was so well fitted for the work as Lincoln would have been had he lived." But, Rhodes continued, "of all men in public life it is difficult to conceive of one so ill-fated for this delicate work as was Andrew Johnson."[1]

Rhodes's own prejudices are apparent throughout his volume on Reconstruction. He disliked Johnson for being an uneducated poor white who was "extremely egotistical" and an excessive drinker. But also important were the author's views on race. He called blacks "one of the most inferior races of mankind." Therefore, Rhodes's negative view of Johnson was tempered by the historian's unfavorable view of Radical Republicans. He claimed they committed "an attack on civilization" by giving the freedman the right to vote.[2] Many other historians would follow a similar path, tempering their criticism with dislike for President Johnson's enemies and their policies.

Rhodes did admit that Andrew Johnson was a man of "strict integrity," "great physical courage," and "intellectual force." He also claimed that "Johnson's plan substantially followed Lincoln's." But while Lincoln was magnanimous, patient, and persuasive, Johnson was inflexible, given to "egotistical harangues," and "lacked political sense." In sum, Rhodes blamed most of Johnson's political failures on "the defects of his character."[3]

Rhodes strongly criticized Johnson's dealings with Congress. While he was highly critical of the Radicals' policies regarding blacks,

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[1]Rhodes, History of the United States, 6:ix-xiii, 1-2.

[2]Ibid., pp. 2, 5, 41, 120.

[3]Ibid., pp. 4-5, 123, 1-2, 72.

Rhodes held Johnson responsible for the Radicals' harsh Reconstruction program. He singled out Johnson's egotistical diatribes against Congress and his vetoes of the Freedman's Bureau and Civil Rights bills, saying these actions ensured Radical ascendancy by destroying any possibility of cooperation. He concluded that "no one else was so instrumental in defeating Johnson's own aims as was Johnson himself."[4]

Another scholarly account, contemporary with Rhodes's, was the John W. Burgess study, Reconstruction and the Constitution, 1866-1876. Part of Scribner's American History Series, the book appeared in 1902. Burgess, a Southerner on the faculty at Columbia, specialized in political science and constitutional law.

Burgess pointed out rather clearly that Johnson's and Lincoln's Reconstruction plans were essentially the same. In an often-quoted phrase, Burgess said that "if Lincoln was right so was Johnson and vice versa."[5] This strengthened the tendency of that era's scholars to point out the soundness of Johnson's policies while blaming his irascible personality for his political failures. If Johnson had been more conciliatory toward Congress,

> instead of insisting upon his constitutional power to reconstruct, independent of Congress . . . and repeating continually his unsound, though specious, arguments in support of his view, it is quite possible that he might have maintained his influence, and in some

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[4]Ibid., pp. 34-57, 59. Like other historians of this and the next era of Johnson historiography, Rhodes used the term "Radicals" loosely. In this discussion, "Radical Reconstruction" will refer in general to the plan of Reconstruction adopted in 1866 and 1867. David Donald and other later historians showed that the "Radicals" were a diverse and changing group of Republicans, and that the Reconstruction plan adopted was supported by a broad base of congressional Republicans.

[5]John W. Burgess, Reconstruction and the Constitution 1866-1876 (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1902), p. 37.

> degree at least, with the Republican majority . . . might have accomplished something in the interest of a true conservatism in Reconstruction.[6]

As for President Johnson personally, Burgess thought he was a man of "considerable intellectual power and great will power" who was "intensely loyal to the Union." However, he also was vain and motivated by revenge toward his social superiors.[7] His suspicious nature, coupled with his stubborn, egotistical inability to compromise meant Johnson was thoroughly lacking in the political savvy necessary to implement his programs. Bugress's overall view was:

> The truth of the whole matter is that, while Mr. Johnson was an unfit person to be President of the United States . . . he was utterly and entirely guiltless of the commission of any crime or misdemeanor. He was low-born and low-bred, violent in temper, obstinate, coarse, vindictive, and lacking in the sense of propriety, but he was not behind any of his accusers in patriotism and loyalty to the country, and in his willingness to sacrifice every personal advantage for the maintenance of the Union and the preservation of the Government. In fact, most of them were pygmies in these qualities beside him. It is true that he differed with them somewhat in his conception of what measures were for the welfare of the country and what not, but the sequel has shown he was nearer right than they in this respect.[8]

There were similarities, then, between the works of Burgess and Rhodes. Both thought Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction policies were similar to Lincoln's and that the moderate approach was a sound one. Both felt that Johnson's personal irascibility and vanity led to his own political defeats. Both felt blacks were ignorant and far from equipped for citizenship, and thereby implied that Johnson's moderate approach was

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[6]Ibid., p. 230.

[7]Ibid., p. 31.

[8]Ibid., pp. 191-92.

correct.[9] Both felt President johnson was intelligent and courageous. On impeachment they differed, with Burgess claiming Johnson should not have been impeached because he had committed no crime. Rhodes said there was "probable cause for impeachment and that it was a case about which honest men might differ."[10]

Another similarity between these two works was the fact that neither author used the Johnson Manuscripts, made available in 1905 by the Library of Congress. Burgess's study predated their availability, so, of course, he could not have used them. Rhodes could have, but he cited them only a few times. It would be up to later historians to look at this source and further refine the view of Andrew Johnson.

Also predating the availability of the Johnson Manuscripts was David Miller DeWitt's Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson. DeWitt did utilize some sources not used by others: private papers in the possession of Johnson's daughter, Martha Patterson; scrapbooks compiled by Col. William Moore, one of Johnson's secretaries; and miscellaneous papers, letters, and telegrams. While DeWitt listed his sources at the book's conclusion, he used few footnotes.

DeWitt's study was concerned primarily with the injustice of impeachment rather than with Johnson's policy. However, some of DeWitt's portrayal was similar to that of Rhodes and Burgess. An attorney, DeWitt showed sympathy for "the stubbornest fighter in civil affairs among the self-made champions of modern democracy." But he pointed out that

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[9]In addition to Rhodes's citations noted earlier, see Burgess, p. 250. Later historians would describe Johnson's policies as racist.

[10]Rhodes, History of the United States, 6:266.

Johnson had sprung from "a low grade of the social scale" and that his nature "hardened into the fixity of cast iron."[11]

DeWitt also attributed Johnson's failures to stubborn irascibility. He was particularly harsh on President Johnson as he proceeded with his "swing around the circle" to garner public support during the 1866 congressional campaign. He claimed that this trip irreparably harmed Johnson's cause:

> his want of dignity . . . his insensibility to the decorum due to his high office, his eagerness to exchange repartee with any opponent no matter how low, his slovenly modes of speech and his offenses against good taste, unfairly blazoned as they were before the country, disgusted many persons who were half-inclined to his policy; made many of the judicious among his supporters hesitate and grow lukewarm; forced his warmest supporters to hang their heads for lack of apology; scattered abroad the ugliest scandals about his personal habits and irretrievably hurt his cause.[12]

Nevertheless, like Rhodes and Burgess, DeWitt also described some of Johnson's good qualities, including "sincerity . . . devotion to his cause and his indomitable determination."[13]

On the whole, DeWitt's book might be described as a more positive view. By depicting Johnson's impeachment as a purely political move, led by vindictive lawmakers Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, and Benjamin Butler, the tone was more favorable than that of other scholarly accounts of the era. DeWitt was very critical of the partisan nature of the impeachment proceedings, said the trial deserved "the everlasting condemnation of all fair-minded men," and said the impeachment leaders

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[11]David Miller Dewitt, The Impeachment and Trail of Andrew Johnson, Seventeenth President of the United States: A History (New York: Russell and Russell, 1903), pp. 629, 39.

[12]Ibid., pp. 123-24.

[13]Ibid., p. 125.

> did not seek to influence their reason with the facts and the law. They cared nothing for the conclusion the senators had actually come to. They wanted these senators to vote "Guilty" whether they thought the President guilty or not.[14]

DeWitt's book was so exhaustive, so thorough, that as recently as 1968 two historians said it was still an almost unquestioned view of impeachment, if not of Andrew Johnson's character.[15]

While Rhodes barely scratched the surface of the Johnson Manuscripts, Columbia historian William A. Dunning explored them more thoroughly. A Southerner, Dunning had already written several articles on Reconstruction. His work was definitively tied together in 1907 with the publication of Reconstruction: Political and Economic 1865-1877, volume 22 of The American Nation series.

In 1905 Dunning had been one of the first professional scholars to scrutinize the Johnson papers. The papers, acquired by the Library of Congress in 1904, contained over 15,000 items. An early Dunning discovery had been that the final draft of Andrew Johnson's much-praised first message to Congress had been written by historian George Bancroft.[16] While some scholars of this period used this revelation as further proof of Johnson's incompetence, Dunning correctly pointed out that most presidents had received similar help. He refrained from making a direct correlation between Johnson's use of a ghost writer and his

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[14]Ibid., p. 549.

[15]James E. Sefton, "The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson: A Century of Writing," Civil War History 14 (June 1968):122; and Hans L. Trefousse, "The Acquittal of Andrew Johnson and the Decline of the Radicals," Civil War History (June 1968):148.

[16]William A. Dunning, "More Light on Andrew Johnson," American Historical Review 11 (April 1906):574-94.

competence.

Dunning's American Nation volume was one of the best-documented accounts of the era. The footnotes and the last chapter, "Critical Essay on Authorities," indicated that he looked extensively at the material then available. But since Rhodes, Burgess, and Blaine's Twenty Years in Congress are cited frequently, along with other sources, it is not surprising that the overall tone is not much different from other accounts written during the same period.

Dunning's first mention of Andrew Johnson was not very favorable: "the man who took up the exercise of the chief executive power on April 15, 1865, was not the man whom any important element of the people in either the North or South would have deliberately chosen for the task." While Johnson "served excellently" as Lincoln's running mate, "few of the party which elected him . . . would have judged it wise to intrust the difficult task of reconstruction to a man whose antecedents were southern slave holding, and ultra-state's-rights Democratic."[17]

Dunning was less harsh concerning President Johnson personally. He was rather admiring, instead of scornful, of Johnson's rise from humble origins, and described him as having "integrity of purpose, force of will, and rude intellectual force."[18] Nevertheless, he blamed Johnson's combativeness and unwillingness to compromise for the failure of his plans to restore the Union.

Like most of his contemporaries, Dunning agreed that Johnson had

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[17]William A. Dunning, Reconstruction: Political and Economic, The American Nation series, Vol. 22, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907), pp. 18-19.

[18]Ibid., p. 19.

tried to carry out Lincoln's plan: "Johnson took up the work at the precise point where Lincoln had left it." This plan, based on mercy and conciliation, was thwarted by Johnson's alienation of the northern moderates whose support he needed.[19] Dunning shared the view that President Johnson's "swing around the circle" was especially damaging:

> [Johnson] had been earnestly warned against extemporaneous speaking, but he did not, doubtless could not, heed; and he paid the penalty. The unfavorable effect of his "swinging round the circle," as this tour was dubbed by the press, was discernable at once in the North. Many persons whose feelings were proof against the appeals made on behalf of the freedman and loyalists were carried over to the side of Congress by sheer disgust at Johnson's performances. The alienation by the president of this essentially thoughtful and conservative element of the northern voters was . . . disastrous.[20]

Dunning also castigated Johnson for not being more conciliatory toward Congress, singling out his vetoes of the Freedman's Bureau and Civil Rights bills as inexcusable, alienating, and a sign of his "narrow and obstinate" policy. All in all, Dunning concluded, "Andrew Johnson was not a statesman of national size in such a crisis as existed in 1866."[21]

Dunning, of course, was the founder of what became virtually a center for studies of the South at Columbia, where he directed the research of many doctoral students in history, including many from the South. Out of their research came a number of studies (some to be covered later) that were much more favorable to the antebellum South than were some of the other (albeit anti-Radical) accounts of Reconstruction

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[19] Ibid., pp. 35, 43.

[20] Ibid., pp. 82.

[21] Ibid.

written during the same period.[22] Thus, it is no surprise that Dunning's racial attitudes were typical of those of white Southerners, and that those attitudes had a bearing on what he wrote.

Dunning's racial attitudes made his writing seem sympathetic to Johnson's policies. He wrote that "Johnson had none of the brilliant illusions that beset . . . the other radicals as to the political capacity of the blacks." Furthermore, he pointed out later,

> The freedmen were not, and in the nature of the case could not for generations be, on the same social, moral, and intellectual plane with the whites; and this fact was recognized by instituting them as a separate class in the civil order.[23]

As far as impeachment was concerned, Dunning was in agreement with DeWitt and Burgess that the ostensible grounds for impeachment were shaky at best. He concluded that

> as the proceedings developed, the moderates were gradually obliged to accept fully the radical ground and to consent to the policy of removing the president, not necessarily for any crime, but on considerations of general party expediency.[24]

Woodrow Wilson was another scholar and Southerner who wrote during this period. Like Dunning, Wilson had written extensively before 1900. But, also like Dunning, his views were similar to the post-1900 work of Rhodes and Burgess, and therefore a discussion of Wilson rightfully belongs in this section.

In a 1901 Atlantic article, Wilson suggested his view of Andrew Johnson by describing Lincoln and Reconstruction:

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[22]Thomas J. Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, rev. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1962), pp. 266-67.

[23]Dunning, Reconstruction, pp. 38, 58.

[24]Ibid., p. 103.

> Had Mr. Lincoln lived, perhaps the whole of the delicate business might have been carried through with dignity, good temper, and simplicity of method, with all necessary concessions to passion, with no pedantic insistence upon consistent and uniform rules, with sensible irregularities and compromises, and yet with a straightforward, frank, and open way of management, which would have assisted to find for every influence its national and legitimate and quieting effect. It was of the nature of Mr. Lincoln's mind to reduce complex situations to their simplest, to guide men without irritating them, to go forward and be practical without being radical--to serve as a genial force which supplied heat enough to keep action warm, and yet minimized the friction and eased the whole progress of affairs.[25]

Reading between the lines one clearly sees that Wilson's view of Johnson was not very positive.

Like the other historians covered here, Wilson claimed that Johnson's plan for Reconstruction was essentially the same as Lincoln's:

> Andrew Johnson promptly made up his mind, when summoned to the presidency, to carry out Mr. Lincoln's plan practically without modification; and he knew exactly what Mr. Lincoln's plan had been, for he himself had restored Tennessee upon that plan, as the President's agent and representative.[26]

And, like the others, Wilson blamed the plan's failure on Johnson's personal shortcomings, describing him as "self-willed, imperious, implacable . . . headstrong and tempestuous."[27]

Johnson's impolitic behavior, said Wilson, assured the failure of a moderate plan to restore the Union:

> He had not been firm; he had been stubborn and bitter. He would yield nothing; vetoed the measures which Congress was most steadfastly minded to insist; alienated his very friends by attacking Congress in public with gross insult and abuse; and lost credit with

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[25]Woodrow Wilson, "The Reconstruction of the Southern States," Atlantic Monthly, January 1901, p. 3.

[26]Ibid., p. 4.

[27]Ibid.

everybody.[28]

And, like DeWitt and others, Wilson singled out the "swing around the circle" as especially harmful:

> It came to a direct issue, the President against Congress; they went to the country with their quarrel in the congressional elections, which fell opportunely with autumn of 1866, and the President lost utterly. Until then some had hesitated to override his vetoes, but after that no one hesitated. 1867 saw Congress go triumphantly forward with its policy of reconstruction . . . .[29]

Also like Dunning, Burgess, Rhodes, and DeWitt, Wilson had little sympathy for the Radicals.[30] However, in a somewhat different vein, Wilson was willing to ascribe the ascendancy of the Radicals to other factors in addition to Johnson's personal failings. First, he claimed that Lincoln's plan was unrealistic in that it protected and granted rights to the freedmen. White Southerners, Wilson wrote, "certainly would not wish to give the negroes political rights." He also claimed that the South's reluctance to accede to Johnson's lenient recommendations "brought absolute shipwreck upon the President's plans and radically altered the whole process of Reconstruction."[31]

Unlike other historians, who implied that if Lincoln had lived affairs would have turned out much better, Wilson was willing to go as far as to say "It may be that much, if not all, of this would have been inevitable under any leadership, the temper of the times and the posture

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[28]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[29]Ibid., p. 10.

[30]Describing Thaddeus Stevens, Wilson said "he had no timidity, no scruples about keeping to constitutional lines of policy, no regard or thought for the sensibilities of the minority [in Congress]." Ibid., p. 8.

[31]Ibid., p. 6.

of affairs being what they were . . . ." However, while Wilson felt Lincoln's ability to implement the plan was questionable he concluded that Johnson made the outcome unavoidable: ". . . it is certain that it was inevitable under the actual circumstances of leadership then existing in Washington."[32]

One final similarity between Wilson and other historians of this era is his attitude on race. He called blacks "children still," and described them as "unschooled in self-control; never sobered by the discipline of self support." He said further that they had "never established any habit of prudence," that they were "excited by a freedom they did not understand," and that "they were insolent and aggressive; sick of work and covetous of pleasure." In short, "they were a danger to themselves as well as to those whom they had once served."[33]

These four early twentieth century historians shared many of the same views. Unlike many of the first-person accounts of the late nineteenth century, these authors' scholarly works did not uniformly both condemn Johnson and praise Reconstruction. Instead, they accepted Johnson's honesty and good intentions while for the most part blaming his stubbornness for his political failures. They subscribed to the view that Lincoln's and Johnson's Reconstruction plans were the same. They faulted the Radicals, both for adopting a Reconstruction plan that was wrong, given black inferiority, and for unjustly impeaching President Johnson for political reasons. Still, it was primarily Johnson's own personal failings, especially his unwillingness to compromise, that were

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[32]Ibid., p. 13.

[33]Ibid., p. 6.

responsible for his defeat. The historians' criticism was not so much what Johnson did--or tried to do--but how he did it. They felt his policies were wise but his leadership was deplorable.

In methodology, too, these accounts differed from the material written in the immediate post-Civil War era. These men were professional historians, not diarists, and they utilized scholarly techniques. While some had been involved personally in the war effort (Burgess, for example), they attempted to be more objective than earlier writers had been. Apparently, they did not have political axes to grind. From a later perspective, though, these writers seemed to be justifying "Jim Crow" laws and racial discrimination.

As was noted earlier, these scholars relied on earlier source materials, but did not use the Johnson papers in the Library of Congress. The papers became available as many of these historians were writing. Other sources became available at that time, too, and they added to the growing body of literature that had implications regarding Andrew Johnson's reputation. Before moving on to other scholarly accounts written during the second half of the 1900-1926 period, it is appropriate to mention some of these additional sources. These letters, diaries, articles in popular magazines, and other materials were probably overshadowed in both volume and importance by the books of the professional historians. Most could be described as anti-Johnson.

The first twentieth century biography of Andrew Johnson was the Reverend James S. Jones's Life of Andrew Johnson, published in 1901. While not available to review here, a later biographer dismissed it as

being poorly written.[34] It apparently was a simple narrative and not very scholarly. Also, unlike many of the other works that appeared at the same time, it was reportedly quite positive in its portrayal. Also appearing in 1901 were a series of articles in The Atlantic Monthly, the popular national literary magazine. (The Woodrow Wilson article just discussed led off this series.) Their publication, aimed at a wide audience, indicated growing nationwide interest in the Reconstruction period.[35]

The articles were more concerned with various topics concerning Reconstruction in general than with Johnson's policies specifically. The authors were from diverse backgrounds, ranging from Southerners like Wilson and Dunning to the black (and later Marxist) intellectual W. E. B. DuBois (who will be discussed more fully in Chapter III). Despite the range of authors, most (except DuBois) subscribed to the general view shared by the scholars whose work was just discussed: Southern blacks were just not ready for the responsibilities of full citizenship.[36]

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[34]Winston, Andrew Johnson, p. 536.

[35]See volume 87 of Atlantic Monthly for Woodrow Wilson, "The Reconstruction of Southern States, January 1901, pp. 1-15; Hilary A. Herbert, "The Conditions of the Reconstruction Problem," February 1901, pp. 145-57; W. E. B. DuBois, "The Freedman's Bureau," March 1901, pp. 354-65; Daniel H. Chamberlain, "Reconstruction in South Carolina," April 1901, pp. 473-84; William G. Brown, "The Ku Klux Movement," May 1901, pp. 634-44; and S. W. McCall, "Washington during Reconstruction,": June 1901, pp. 816-26. See volume 88 for Albert Phelps, "New Orleans and Reconstruction," July 1901, pp. 121-31; Thomas Nelson Page, "The Southern People during Reconstruction," September 1901, pp. 189-304; unsigned editorial, "Reconstruction and Disfranchisement," October 1901, pp. 433-37; and William A. Dunning, "The Undoing of Reconstruction," in the same issue, pp. 437-49.

[36]Phelps, "New Orleans and Reconstruction," p. 125; Page, "The Southern People," p. 304; and Dunning, "The Undoing," p. 449. While Page and Dunning, both Southerners, were hardly surprising in their view, even

However they may have viewed Andrew Johnson personally, these writers implied that they approved his policies, and disapproved of the Radicals, through their attitudes on race.

Other works that appeared in this period included diaries and other first-person accounts: Recollections of Half a Century, written in 1902 by Alexander K. McClure; Autobiography of Seventy Years by Massachusetts Senator George Hoar (1903); Recollections of Thirteen Presidents (1906), by John S. Wise, a Southerner who married the daughter of a close friend of Johnson's; Memoirs of Cornelius Cole, elected to the U.S. Senate from California (1908); and The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz (1908).

McClure, a lawyer, newspaperman, and politician, repeated some of the criticisms of Andrew Johnson put forth in the late nineteenth century. He claimed President Johnson had returned the post-Civil War South to the rule of secessionists and that he was stubborn and impolitic.[37] While Hoar was not so harsh on Johnson personally, he certainly subscribed to the view that Johnson precipitated the events that led to impeachment:

> President Johnson permitted them [white Southern Democrats] in several states to take into their hands again the power of government. They proceeded to pass laws which if carried out would have had the effect of reducing the negro once more to a condition of

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the unsigned editorial subscribed to this view ("Reconstruction and Disfranchisement," p. 434). W. E. B. DuBois did not agree, of course, but his piece stuck fundamentally to the successes and failure of the Freedman's Bureau. DuBois did not use the article as a forum to dispute the prevailing views on race, though he inferred that simmering racial problems and attitudes would have to be addressed soon. He ended his article by stating, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." (DuBois, "The Freedman's Bureau," p. 365.)

[37]Alexander K. McClure, Recollections of Half a Century (Salem, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 1902), pp. 63-64.

political slavery.[38]

John S. Wise was a Southerner, but his roots did not dictate his feelings. He termed the Johnson presidency "a gloomy, embittered, humiliating time." He dwelled on Johnson's "poor white origins," and tied the aim of Johnson's early Reconstruction policy to his vengeful nature and "life-long grudge against that class of southern people which . . . he never failed to denounce." Wise pointed out that Johnson's policy changed in time to one more lenient, but that this policy was even "more injurious" to the South since his political enemies, the Radicals, were driven by his obstinacy and leniency to an even harsher program. He also repeated the charge that Johnson was a drunk.[39]

Cole, like McClure, accused Johnson of favoring the South after he became president. In fact, he said "he could hardly have been more deferential" towards Southerners. Cole attributed Johnson's political failures to his irascible personality and inability to compromise. He said Johnson was "naturally combative" and "little disposed to conciliate." In short, he caused his own impeachment.[40] Cole, like McClure, Hoar, and Wise, deplored Johnson's policy and criticized him personally.

These views were at least somewhat offset by the appearance in a

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[38]George Frisbie Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 1:256.

[39]John S. Wise, Recollections of Thirteen Presidents (New York: Doubleday, 1906; reprint ed., Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 101-02, 109, 111-12.

[40]Cornelius Cole, Memoirs of Cornelius Cole, Ex-Senator of the United States from California (New York: McLoughlin Brothers, 1908), pp. 275-77.

1908 Century article of the views of William H. Crook, former head of the White House guard. Sympathetic in tone, Crook's account claimed Johnson was not a drunkard and that he was "hard-working and businesslike." He also said Johnson's speeches were well-received by those who heard them and misrepresented by the press, which was "on the outlook for a sensation." He asserted that the president had tried to carry out Lincoln's policies, and while Johnson "found it impossible to conciliate or temporize," he hinted that Lincoln may have had as difficult a time with Congress as Johnson did.[41]

Carl Schurz's Reminiscences were published in 1908. A prominent political figure for several decades, Schurz's attitudes toward Johnson were already a matter of public record. His memoirs, though, stood as a permanent resource that, when augmented by his published speeches, left little question as to his sentiments concerning the post-Civil War period.[42] Like Henry Wilson, James Blaine, and George Boutwell, Schurz was a Republican and a supporter of Radical Reconstruction. And, like the diaries and writings of the other men, Schurz's reminiscences were a searing castigation of President Johnson.

Schurz characterized President Johnson as having an "irritated temper" and "acerbity of tone," and concluded that he "belonged to that unfortunate class of men with whom a difference of opinion on any important matter will at once cause personal ill feeling." Schurz thus faulted the president personally. Then he criticized Johnson's

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[41]Margarita Spalding Gerry, "Andrew Johnson in the White House, Being the Reminiscences of William H. Crook," The Century Magazine, September 1908, pp. 654-55, 661, 663-65.

[42]See Bancroft, ed., Speeches and Correspondence.

Reconstruction plan, saying it "flushed with new hope" the "still-existing" Confederate spirit. He claimed Johnson was not following Lincoln's plan (since he was an admirer of Lincoln, this was no surprise), that Johnson did irreparable harm to his own position through his public appearances, and that while impeachment was politically motivated, it was necessary because he had put the country "in some sort of peril."[43]

Schurz's memoirs stand in stark contrast to those of Gideon Welles. Welles had been secretary of the navy under Lincoln and Johnson. His sympathetic portrayal was reminiscent of that of Hugh McCulloch, but, like Schurz's volumes, his views were not available in published form until after the turn of the century. Welles's Diary was used extensively by later scholars as a source on the Johnson administration. For example, James Schouler's work (to be discussed shortly) drew heavily on Welles's account. Since the works on Johnson published during the teens, twenties, and thirties were much more sympathetic to President Johnson, the publication of the Welles Diary, while not exactly a turning point in Johnson's reputation, served as a portent of scholarly works to come. While a later scholar characterized Welles as a "bitter partisan" and warned that "opinions expressed in [the diary] should be treated with caution,"[44] any scholar looking at Reconstruction would be remiss in not consulting it.

Welles praised Johnson for his intelligence and patriotism. "He

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[43]Carl Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz 3 vols., (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page, 1917), 3:187, 212-13, 221-22, 225-26, 252.

[44]Benedict, Impeachment and Trial, p. 199.

has great [mental] capacity, is conversant with our public affairs beyond most men, has much experience." He claimed Johnson also possessed "great firmness, sincere patriotism, a sacred regard for the Constitution, [and] is humane and benevolent . . . ." Welles had little sympathy for the Radicals. He claimed that the Radicals unfairly maligned the president, that they accused him "of being irritable and obstinate," while the truth was "he has been patient and forbearing." The Radicals as a whole were "wicked and unscrupulous conspirators, guided by fanatics." He attacked Thaddeus Stevens directly, calling him a "malignant and suspicious old man" who "liked notoriety and power."[45]

Nevertheless, like McCulloch, Welles pointed out Johnson's faults. A recurring theme in the Diary is that Johnson did not act decisively enough, and that he too often made isolated decisions. Furthermore, Welles claimed, once a decision was made, Johnson was "immovable." When he suspended Secretary of War Stanton from office, a decision made without consulting anyone, he brought ruin upon himself: "He took a step which consolidated the Radicals of every stripe, strengthened Stanton, while it weakened his supporters and brought down a mountain of trouble on himself." Johnson's public appearances thereafter, and his "swing around the circle" only made things worse.[46]

While the president's behavior invited criticism, impeachment was not a fair or appropriate response. To Welles, it was purely political. He claimed the president had not "committed any wrong, or that any

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[45]Gideon Welles, Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson 3 vols., (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1911), 3:190, 391-92, 513-14.

[46]Ibid., pp. 7, 46, 190, 315, 439.

offense can be stated." To mount an impeachment compaign, the Radicals had to find "some mistake, some error, some act" which "could be construed into a political fault," thus justifying Johnson's removal because he was "an obstacle in the way of Radicalism."[47]

Welles concluded his discussion of Johnson by saying "no better person has occupied the Executive Mansion" but that he had not "the tact, skill, and talent to wield the administrative power of the government to advantage in times like these with a factious majority in Congress against him." While "his administrative capabilities and management" were not "equal some of his predecessors," he was "faithful to the Constitution." Welles's final point about Andrew Johnson was that "of measures he was a good judge, but not always of men."[48]

Several works of historian James Schouler comprised the next installment of scholarly work that had a bearing upon Andrew Johnson's reputation. Schouler's work pointed toward the beginnings of a revisionist view of President Johnson, and in some ways parallelled the Johnson defenders of the 1920s and 1930. What is perhaps surprising about Schouler is that he was not only from the North, he was a Union Army veteran. A Massachusetts attorney, he later took up historical writing. Volumes of his six-part series, History of the United States of America Under the Constitution, appeared beginning in 1880.

Schouler's focus on Andrew Johnson became evident in 1906. He contributed two articles on Johnson to The Outlook and spoke on Johnson before the Massachusetts Historical Society. His views then were similar

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[47]Ibid., p. 61.

[48]Ibid., pp. 513-14, 556.

to those of Rhodes and the other historians discussed earlier. He admitted the president's courage and honesty and claimed that his policies were wise but blamed his failures on his "willful and inflexible temper, his adherence to plans impossible of execution" and said Johnson "did harm to himself and his supporters, as well as to those southern fellow-citizens whom he had meant to succor."[49]

By 1911, Schouler's views became more favorable. He had looked closely at Andrew Johnson's papers and he read Welles's Diary. He concluded that Johnson's reputation had been unfairly tarnished by earlier writers. The first full articulation of his revised view appeared in an article in the January 1912 issue of The Bookman. He opened the article by positing the belief that Johnson, "weighted with tremendous responsibilities thrust suddenly and inevitably upon him by fate, will be held in kinder regard by posterity than he was by fellow-countrymen during his lifetime."[50]

Schouler then proceeded to take issue with views set forth by Rhodes (and, implicitly, others). He claimed the president's humble origins were an asset, not a liability, that his utilization of Bancroft and others to assist his writing showed wisdom and humility, and that, in fact, the president was a "strong and effective penman." He refuted the stories that Johnson was a habitual drunkard, and maintained that the president did not isolate himself but actually was accessible and

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[49]James Schouler, "President Johnson and Negro Suffrage," The Outlook 13 January 1906, p. 71; "President Johnson's Policy," The Outlook 3 February 1906, p. 260; and "President Johnson's Papers," Proceedings (Boston: n.p., 1906), pp. 432-36.

[50]James Schouler, "President Johnson and Posterity." The Bookman, January 1912, p. 498.

available to counsel with both supporters and critics. He closed by saying that "the greatest of statesmen have their faults of character," and Johnson was a "character deserving of confidence and respect." Furthermore, "We are now prepared," he said, "to review . . . the details of Johnson's ill-starred administration."[51]

That review was published the next year as the newly-added volume 7 of Schouler's History series. In the preface he explained that a study of Johnson's papers led him to believe that "injustice had been done Johnson in the popular estimate of his official career," a belief that was "strongly confirmed" by the Welles diaries. As a result, Schouler "felt deeply that this much maligned President needed a vindication, as against other historical writers, and furthermore, that the vindicator ought to be myself."[52]

Directly challenging the Rhodes view, he again praised the president for his humble origins, and compared him to Jackson and Lincoln. He also repeated his refutation of the charge that the president drank to excess, and countered the view that Johnson was "ill-fitted" for the presidency:

> For patriotism, energy, and courage, both in winding up the conflict and in bringing broad statesmanship to the problem of pacification, no Vice-President likely to have been a candidate in 1864 could have been better qualified in the whole country; and Johnson's intimate knowledge, moreover, of the South and of present southern conditions, made him of invaluable service for reunion . . . .[53]

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[51]Ibid., pp. 499-503.

[52]James Schouler, History of the United States of America Under the Constitution, vol. 7: History of the Reconstruction Period (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1913) p. iii.

[53]Ibid., p. 45.

Schouler stopped short of being consistently positive. He admitted that, while "much maligned," Johnson as "hard to comprehend," and that his performance presented "aspects contradictory." He admitted that the president was stubborn, "a combatant by temperament," and "largely wanting in those delicate arts of tactful management which ensure co-operation." He concluded that Johnson "created difficulties for himself at every step, while trying to carry out ideas often of themselves sound and useful."[54] Thus, while Schouler came closer than any professional historian to revising Johnson's image, he still remained within the "wise policy, poor leadership" school of thought.

Historian Lawrence H. Gipson, writing in a 1915 volume of The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, presented a view similar to Schouler's. While he admitted Johnson had made some political mistakes, he, like Schouler, blamed the president's failures in part on forces beyond his control. Sources cited included Rhodes, McCullough, Burgess, Dunning, Blaine, and Crook, but it was the Welles Diary that he quoted most extensively.

Gipson suggested that even Lincoln himself "might have become the Reconstruction scapegoat." While Johnson's public speeches harmed his cause, the president's policies failed because the South's intransigence (especially the enactment of so-called "black codes") brought out the critics and "gave a handle to the opponents of the government that they were not slow in seizing." Like most other scholars of his time, Gipson had little sympathy for the Radicals, saying of their Reconstruction

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[54]Ibid., p. 142.

program: "to say the least it was a disastrous experiment."[55]

Gipson concluded with a suggestion that a revision of Andrew Johnson's reputation was in order:

> The deep rancors of that period have been obliterated, with the result that historical judgments are being reversed. This is especially true with respect to the work of President Johnson. For as time goes on it seems to testify with increasing clearness that the statesmanship of Johnson was not at fault so much as was the statesmanship of his leading critics . . . . The so-called mistakes of Johnson's probably weighed little in the balance when compared to the vast opposition that at last developed under a wave of radicalism against his leading measures and his attempts to hold back Congress.[56]

The next full chapter in the story of Andrew Johnson's reputation did not begin until the 1920s. Between Schouler's and Gipson's work and the mid-1920s, however, there were yet other works that touched upon the president's image.

Three additional sets of memoirs appeared, Notable Men of Tennessee, from 1833 to 1875: Their Times and Their Contemporaries (1912) by Oliver P. Temple, My Memories of Eighty Years (1924) by Chauncey Depew, and President Rutherford B. Hayes's Diary (1926). None did much to shake the prevailing Rhodes-Dunning-Burgess interpretation.

Temple, who was several years younger than Johnson, knew him when both were growing up in Greeneville. While flattering the president in some respects, Temple characterized Johnson throughout his account as belligerent and pugnacious, cautious and suspicious, driven by a "desire of power." He attributed Johnson's downfall to "his habit of pandering

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[55]Lawrence H. Gipson, "The Statesmanship of President Johnson," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 2 (December 1915):363, 376, 381.

[56]Ibid., pp. 382-83.

to the passions of the [common] people," a group Temple clearly disliked.[57]

Depew, an attorney and senator, revived the charges that Johnson drank habitually and that he changed his southern policy because he had been flattered by the post-Civil War attention he received from aristocratic Southerners. While he admitted to the president's "vigorous mentality," he concluded that Johnson differed (implicitly in a negative way) from the other presidents Depew had known, which included all from Lincoln to Harding.[58]

Also added to the literature of the time was a Century series on "After the War." The series began in November 1912 with a piece on the Greeley campaign and continued through 1914, concluding with articles on the Hayes-Tilden election. In between were several articles on Johnson's impeachment and Reconstruction in general. Like the Atlantic series, the Century series showed a wide variety of viewpoints. Most repeated arguments already discussed here.

Two authors, Los Angeles Times editor Harrison Gray Otis, and Vermont Senator George Edwards, said the president's policy was wrong; two others, Missouri Senator John B. Henderson (one of seven Republicans to vote for Johnson's acquittal), and Atlanta Constitution editor Clark Howell, seemed to subscribe to the "wise policy, poor leader" school; three others, Alabama Democrat Hilary Herbert, Library of Congress librarian Gaillard Hunt, and Benjamin Truman, Johnson's former secretary,

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[57]Temple, Notable Men, p. 455.

[58]Chauncey Depew, My Memories of Eight Years (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), pp. 48-50.

were generally favorable.[59] Truman's account was notable because it was quoted by later writers.

Some additional works by historians also appeared between Schouler's writing and 1927. These included Benjamin Kendrick's book on Reconstruction, The Journal of the Joint Committee of Fifteen and Reconstruction (1914); Clifton Hall's Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of Tennessee (1916); Ellis Oberholtzer's first volume in his A History of the United States Since the Civil War (1917); and Walter Fleming's The Sequel to Appomattox (1919).

Kendrick, a Dunning student, was another who felt that Johnson's ability as a leader did not match the wisdom of his policy. He claimed that Johnson would have maintained more support in Congress if he had been more willing to compromise and was less acerbic. He characterized the president as "a first-rate stump speaker, a second-rate statesman, and a third-rate politician . . . ."[60]

Clifton Hall also was not generous in his judgment. His book focused strictly on Johnson's role as military governor, rather than on his presidency. While Hall took issue with some of Temple's views, he agreed with Temple that Andrew Johnson was "narrow, bigoted,

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[59]See volume 85 of Century Magazine. The articles concerning impeachment are: Harrison Gray Otis, "The Causes of Impeachment," December 1912, pp. 187-95; John B. Henderson, "Emancipation and Impeachment," in the same issue, pp. 196-209; Gaillard Hunt, "The President's Defense," January 1913, pp. 422-34; and Benjamin C. Truman, "Anecdotes of Andrew Johnson," same issue, pp. 435-40. The articles on Reconstruction are: Clark Howell, "The Aftermath of Reconstruction," April 1913, pp. 844-53; Hilary A. Herbert, "How We Redeemed Alabama," same issue, pp. 854-62; and George F. Edmunds, "Ex-Senator Edmunds on Reconstruction and Impeachment," also in the same issue, pp. 863-64.

[60]Benjamin B. Kendrick, The Journal of Joint Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), p. 453.

uncompromising, suspicious; his nature solitary and reticent; his demeanor coldly repellent or violently combative."[61]

Oberholtzer's and Fleming's views were essentially the same as those of many of the works of this period. Oberholtzer held that Johnson's policy was moderate, and therefore sound, but that he was a "political ignoramus." Like others he extolled Johnson's honesty and patriotism, while claiming he was something of a demagogue.[62] Fleming was even less kind, attacking Johnson as "ill-educated, narrow, vindictive . . . stubborn, irascible, and undignified."[63]

Despite some of these unflattering views, the scholarly works of this period showed that professional scholars were reexamining the nineteenth century picture of Andrew Johnson. The earlier scholarly works of the 1900-1926 period, while not kind to Johnson personally, at least showed approval of his policy. Schouler and Gipson showed even greater acceptance of Johnson in that they not only approved his policy but they attributed his failures to other factors in addition to his personal deficiencies. And, as a whole, most of the scholarly writing about Johnson that appeared after 1900 was, if not totally sympathetic, at least more objective.

With the passing of the Civil War era politicians, the harsh views of Johnson published during and after Reconstruction ceased to be

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[61]Clifton R. Hall, Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of Tennessee (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916), p. 218.

[62]Ellis P. Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War 5 vols., (New York: Macmillan, 1917-1937), 1:405, 210, 477.

[63]Walter L. Fleming, The Sequel of Appomattox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), pp. 71-72, 137.

as prominent or as important. The increasing professionalization of scholarly study certainly contributed to the greater emphasis on objectivity. Some of the new sources made available were sympathetic to Johnson, particularly the Johnson Manuscripts and Welles's Diary, and these opened the door to a modification of prevailing views. As the Atlantic and Century series showed, a wider national audience was receptive to a variety of views on Reconstruction, including those written by Southerners.

While Andrew Johnson's reputation did not make a complete about-face in the first two decades of the twentieth century, for the most part attitudes towards his policies did change for the better. By this time it was difficult for even the staunchest northern Republicans to ignore the corruption and mismanagement that occurred under Radical Reconstruction. Furthermore, the North had retreated from its insistence on black equality, and instead even most northern historians claimed that blacks, if not destined to be inferior forever, were still unfit for full participation in the political process. An obvious conclusion, then, was that Andrew Johnson's moderate racial policies were correct and the Radicals, who insisted on full and immediate political equality, were wrong.[64]

Most professional scholars writing about the Civil War and Reconstruction between 1900 and 1926 agreed in one way or another that Johnson's policies were correct. They also mostly agreed that the president brought failure upon himself through his own tactless political

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[64]See the seminal work on this topic, first published in 1955: C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, 2nd rev. ed., (New York: Oxford, 1966).

blunders. Nearly all agreed that Andrew Johnson had at least some good qualities. Where they differed was the degree of importance placed on his failings and his strengths.

The scene was thus set for the next chapter in Andrew Johnson's historiographical rise and fall, one that began with a 1926 Supreme Court decision. In the 1920s professional scholars and biographers produced numerous studies that, to say the least, were very pro-Johnson. They seemed to have followed the suggestion of North Carolina historian J.G. deRoulhac Hamilton, who in 1915 urged that the view of Johnson be changed, that "the time has come for Americans to see him as he was; to hold up his noble qualities for the admiration and emulation of the generation of coming Americans."[65]

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[65]Joseph G. deRoulhac Hamilton, "The Southern Policy of Andrew Johnson," Proceedings (Raleigh: Historical Association of North Carolina, 1915), p. 80.

CHAPTER III

1927-1960: THE CANONIZATION AND BEYOND

The "wise policy, poor leadership" interpretation of Andrew Johnson, modified somewhat by Schouler and Gipson, sowed the seeds for a major revision of President Johnson's image. Several scholars reaped the harvest in the late 1920s. Some had legal backgrounds, some were Southerners. One need only see the titles of their books to realize these scholars viewed the Radicals and Reconstruction in general with as much venom as the Radicals, and their later sympathizers, had earlier portrayed Johnson. Rarely has a period in history inspired such revealing titles: The Tragic Era, The Age of Hate, The Dreadful Decade, The Angry Scar.

Many factors contributed to the remarkable transformation in Andrew Johnson's reputation. Rhodes, Dunning, Burgess, and others had already looked more critically at Radical Reconstruction than had nineteenth century writers. The early 1900s were the "Progressive Era" in American politics, and the temper of the times was to identify and eliminate government corruption. No one could deny that some Radical Reconstruction programs had been marked by much corruption. Furthermore, the entire Reconstruction period and the Grant administration had culminated in 1876 with the Hayes-Tilden election, one of exceptional bitterness. It's little wonder that scholars began to look at Andrew

Johnson with more favor. After all, he was a man who had opposed the Radical program at almost every turn and had ended his political career in the Senate with a stinging denunciation of the corrupt Grant regime.

Racial attitudes also played a part. The 1877 political capitulation to conservative Southerners (and their attitudes) silenced most Northerners on the issue. The colonialism and imperialism of the times lent credence to the "white man's burden" and theories of racial inferiority. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the South proved Americans were not ready for racial equality and served as awful proof that policies adopted by the Radicals were inappropriate. Negro inferiority was accepted as a given by most Americans, including many scholars.

World War I was another factor contributing to a reexamination of Andrew Johnson's image. Almost all the professional historians writing between the 1890s and the 1920s recognized Johnson's patriotism and his pro-Union stance. After the war, Johnson's values were easier to admire.

A final thread that tied together the pro-Johnson theme was an increased emphasis on the common man. Progressive historians and social reformers looked at government corruption, but they also looked at American society. They saw the plight of the American workingman, as yet largely unprotected by the labor legislation Americans would take for granted later. Scholars criticized the industrialists who had captained the post-Civil War industrial expansion that led to labor exploitation. This impulse, shown especially by historian Charles A. Beard, led to an emphasis on democratic champions of the common man. Andrew Johnson, born to poverty and a democrat as well as a Democrat in the Jacksonian tradition, certainly fit the bill.

The opening act in the dramatic shift in Andrew Johnson's reputation was marked with appropriate dignity by a case decided in the nation's highest court. In 1926, the Supreme Court in effect struck down the Tenure of Office Act that had served as the basis for Andrew Johnson's impeachment.[1] The decision lifted Johnson's mantle of public ignominy. The Radicals, already proven wrong on several counts, were proven wrong again.

The first book-length study touching upon Andrew Johnson's revised reputation appeared in 1926. Don C. Seitz's The Dreadful Decade covered the years 1869-1879. Sparsely documented, the book mentioned Johnson only a few times. But the author's attitudes toward the Radicals (and Johnson, by implication) were apparent throughout, and indicated that a reversal in attitude was taking place. Seitz soundly criticized the Radicals, particularly Stevens and Sumner. He claimed their Reconstruction policy unfairly taxed the South of its resources, humiliated Southerners, and opened the door to widespread corruption. President Johnson, he said, wisely tried to veto much of what they proposed. Thankfully for the South, the election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877 ended the era of the Radical Republicans.[2]

Two articles about Johnson published in 1927 also pointed towards a turnaround in Johnson's reputation. The first was directly influenced by the Supreme Court decision. A Current History article by Tennessee attorney and politician James Malone claimed Johnson was clearly

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[1]Myers v. United States, 272 U.S. 52 (1926).

[2]Don C. Seitz, The Dreadful Decade (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1926), pp. 13-12, 307-12.

vindicated by Myers v. United States. Stating that Johnson's "character and career have so often been misrepresented," Malone pointed out that "though he did commit errors, he was far from being a mere ignoramus . . . ." Malone faulted the Radicals for their insistence upon an unwise policy. He claimed Johnson's temperament mellowed after he took up the presidency, absolving him of responsibility for the inability of the two sides to compromise. The Radicals' impeachment of the president was purely political, and Malone concluded that the 1926 Supreme Court decision was "reassuring" and supplied "vindication of a President who was no less loyal and devoted to his country than he was remarkable as a man."[3]

A second article by Margarita S. Gerry appeared in Century. She compiled the Crook memoirs discussed earlier. Gerry's argument was strongly reminiscent of Schouler's and Gipson's. Quoting Welles, she listed President Johnson's virtues but admitted his faults. She was especially critical of the Washington's Birthday speech and the "swing around the circle." The latter she termed his "political undoing" since it "lost the respect of many thinking men."[4]

Gerry went farther than Schouler and Gipson had, and mostly blamed forces beyond Johnson's control for his undoing. Calling him a "passionate Constitutionalist" who "conceived it was his duty to carry out the policy that Lincoln had inaugurated," she pointed out that he had inherited "a dangerous situation," which was a "fight on the Executive

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[3]James H. Malone, "The Supreme Court Vindicates Andrew Johnson," Current History 26 (April 1927):7-8, 12.

[4]Margarita Spalding Gerry, "The Real Andrew Johnson," Century Magazine, November/December 1927, pp. 219, 221.

begun during Lincoln's administration." She blamed Sumner and Stevens for this. She also maintained that the exigencies of war required strong congressional action, and that at the war's end Congress was reluctant to surrender its wartime power. She suggested that "there can be no surety that even Lincoln's masterly diplomacy and all his prestige . . . could have won against the fanatical and venal elements" of the Republicans. She concluded that Johnson's political mistakes were compounded by his personal inadequacies, but that "There is every evidence in the records of Congress that strife really was Johnson's by inheritance."[5]

The real transformation in Andrew Johnson's reputation began in 1928. In a period of three years, five books were published that presented notably similar and highly favorable looks at Johnson and his policies. Their approaches were not the same, there were some differences of interpretation, not all were equally influential, and not all the authors were professional historians. But, combined, they raised the public image of Johnson so much that earlier Johnson critics probably would have been astonished. Their villain had become a hero.

Four of the books, those of Robert Winston, Lloyd Paul Stryker, George Fort Milton, and Claude Bowers, were similar in several respects. They discounted the efforts of earlier writers. They extolled Andrew Johnson's efforts to overcome his boyhood poverty. They emphasized that Johnson was a champion of the common man. They praised his defense of the Union and the Constitution. They linked Johnson with Lincoln. They claimed Radical opposition to a lenient Reconstruction plan had crystallized during Lincoln's presidency, thereby almost completely

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[5]Ibid., pp. 63, 58, 64.

exonerating Johnson for the political unpopularity of the lenient plan. They unanimously blamed the evil, vindictive, and partisan Radicals for the awful state of the Union during Reconstruction.

The negative view of the Radicals had been advanced by Rhodes and refined by Dunning and his followers. The "Dunning School" held that a single segment of the Republican, the Radicals, were the driving force behind almost all Reconstruction legislation. Furthermore, Dunning held that the Radicals' motives were openly political, and not humanitarian. This argument greatly oversimplified the issues, minimized the importance of Republican moderates, and dismissed any genuine concern for the plight of the freedman. The pro-Johnson writers embraced the Dunning view of the Radicals, but rejected Dunning's criticism of Johnson. Instead they used a simplified picture of Reconstruction history to exonerate Johnson's reputation. They succeeded, perhaps partly because two of them--Milton and Bowers--were journalists who aimed their books at the "new mass reading public of the 1920s, which preferred easily understood, vivid history." The view was read and most likely accepted by a wide audience.[6]

The first of these accounts was Robert W. Winston's Andrew Johnson: Plebian and Patriot, published in 1928. Ironically, Winston, a North Carolina judge, was from an aristocratic southern family, of the ilk Johnson himself had so disliked. The book was long--over 500 pages--and extensively documented. For that reason, it is probably safe to say that it was the first authoritative Johnson biography. However, because

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[6]Larry Kincaid, "Victims of Circumstance: An Interpretation of Changing Attitudes Toward Republican Policy Makers and Reconstruction," 57 Journal of American History (June 1970):50, 52, 55.

Winston was not a professional scholar, the book cannot be compared in lasting importance to some of the works that followed.[7]

A look at Winston's sources shows he consulted almost all the works available at that time. He cited the Johnson Manuscripts continually. He also looked closely at congressional testimony and the Congressional Globe. Other sources included almost every account mentioned in this study: Temple, Blaine, Rhodes, Wise, Jones, Schouler, Henry Wilson, Welles, Dunning, McCulloch, Oberholtzer, Crook, Fleming, the Century series (especially Truman), Butler, Kendrick, Woodrow Wilson, Burgess, DeWitt, and Boutwell.

Winston stated at the outset that he didn't think Andrew Johnson had been given a "fair deal." He obviously admired Johnson's rise from poverty, and implied other writers had been wrong in focusing on his plebian roots and plain-spoken style. Winston stated that "the malignity with which [Johnson] had been pursued" led him "to undertake the job of writing his life."[8]

In the first two parts of the biography Winston described Johnson's early life and political career. He put Johnson squarely within the political tradition of Andrew Jackson, thus echoing the works of some earlier historians, especially Schouler. Winston claimed Johnson's early years in the Tennessee legislature gave him the opportunity to extol what would become his lifelong philosophy: "a rigid

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[7]Actually, Winston's background may have been an asset. Eric McKitrick claimed that Winston's writing showed an "amiably chaotic" sense of history, but that his "amateurishness . . . may have preserved for his book a certain detachment." See McKitrick, Profile, pp. xiii-xiv.

[8]Robert W. Winston, Andrew Johnson: Plebian and Patriot (New York: Henry Holt, 1928), pp. xvi, xiii.

economy, adherence to the Constitution, attachment to democracy in its simplest form and, above all, justice to the man who toiled and labored." Winston then described the Johnson presidential style. He painted a rosy picture, showing Johnson to be a hard working, wise, and honest executive.[9]

Like Dunning, Winston's view of the Radicals was negative; he was even more negative than Dunning (and Rhodes and others) had been. Winston went farther than earlier historians, claiming the Radicals were strongly opposed to Lincoln's Reconstruction plan before his assassination. Thus, when Johnson sought to "carry out the policy of his predecessor," the Radicals resisted at every turn. Andrew Johnson did not take a wise plan and fail due to his personal shortcomings, as Rhodes and others had claimed. He took a wise plan and had to contend with the deliberate, concerted opposition that had already solidified when Lincoln had first introduced the plan.[10]

Winston strongly linked both Lincoln and Johnson with the Constitution. Thus, when the Radicals attacked first Lincoln and then Johnson, they really attacked the Constitution itself: "Congress assailed Lincoln's [plan] . . . . Even the conservatives . . . insisted on radical changes in the Constitution." But Johnson rose to the defense; he "considered Congress the aggressor, and if he must die defending the Constitution, and with boots on . . . he vetoed every bill he regarded as unconstitutional."[11]

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[9]Ibid., pp. 29, 31.

[10]Ibid., pp. 266, 269, 325-26.

[11]Ibid., pp. 352, 326-26, 346.

Winston's arguments regarding impeachment were clear. The Radicals would not stand for a readmitted South that did not offer the freedman voting rights. The Republicans wanted "to humiliate, disgrace, pauperize, and Africanize the South." With Johnson in the way, impeachment was the only course. They used every underhanded tactic they could: "While the House was busy nosing around for proof of its charges, radical Senators, under the leadership of Ben Wade, were equally busy packing the Senate to convict." Later, "Heaven and earth were moved to whip weak-kneed Republicans into line." The seven Republicans who voted against conviction "were hounded to their political death."[12]

While the Radicals were the target of most of Winston's finger-pointing, the author did criticize Johnson at least somewhat. Faulting him for being "stubborn and pugnacious," though "loyal, through and through," Winston concluded that Johnson's philosophy was of another, earlier era. According to Winston, this caused problems for Johnson:

> The ancient social structure of America lay in hopeless ruins; conditions after the war were totally different from those before the war. The days of individualism were gone. The rise of Nationalism was manifest in Europe and in America. Andrew Johnson did not appreciate this fact. He set himself against a force which has controlled the world from that day . . . .[13]

However, even in this regard Winston fell short of being completely critical. The seemingly backward-looking Winston concluded that the ascendancy of nationalism and the corresponding growth of federal power achieved under the Radicals was not such a good thing: "Are nationalization, centralization and bigness wholly desirable?" he asked

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[12]Ibid., pp. 407, 410, 453.

[13]Ibid., pp. 373, 328.

in his conclusion. Considering the state of the world by the late 1920s, including such developments as a world war, Prohibition, child labor laws, the Mann Acts, and so on, Winston suggested that America might have much "trouble in store." This trouble could be dealt with much more easily by the pre-Civil War Constitution that Johnson so admired, a Constitution that left many decisions to the states.[14]

Winston concluded by saying that "time only can tell whether [Johnson] was right" in his approach. Regardless of that verdict, the fact remained indisputable that "if Secession Democracy was silly, wicked, [and] criminal, the Radicalism of 1865-69 was more wicked and more criminal."[15]

Lloyd Paul Stryker's biography, Andrew Johnson--A Study in Courage, appeared next, in 1929. A New York trial lawyer, Stryker used many of the same sources Winston had, as well as newspaper accounts and even church sermons of the times. His book was longer than Winston's, exceeding 800 pages. Unlike Winston, Stryker specifically singled out earlier historians by name. In his introduction he held that "historians have stirred the old embers of hate and in the form of history given us little better than a digest of contemporary calumnies." Stryker said the reason for this was that fair treatment of Johnson meant convicting "the authors of the Fourteenth Amendment and the architects of the solid South of the meanest crimes . . . ."[16]

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[14]Ibid., pp. 518-19.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Lloyd Paul Stryker, Andrew Johnson: A Study in Courage (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. viii-ix.

He quoted Burgess and Rhodes as proof of earlier historians' unfairness. Referring to Rhodes's harsh description of Johnson's impoverished background, he responded: "It would require a strong palate for snobbery to enjoy that paragraph." He concluded his introductory remarks by claiming "What Johnson did and tried to do for his country will not suffer by comparison" with any other men of his time, and that "this narrative will compel that comparison."[17]

Like Winston, Stryker contended that Johnson had inherited the Radicals' hatred of Lincoln. First he established that they had attacked Lincoln:

> Lincoln was traduced and ridiculed as few men ever were . . . . The Radicals of Congress opposed him at every step of the way; he stood between them and their malignant hopes. They saw an opportunity to treat the Southern states as conquered provinces and thereby to exploit the South. They were dreaming of the carpet-bag regime. Lincoln envisioned a Union reunited . . . . He had determined to "bind up the nation's wounds." The Radicals of Congress planned to keep them open.[18]

Then Stryker showed that the Radicals transferred their bitterness to Johnson:

> Johnson took not only Lincoln's place but his plan of reconstruction also. Animated by a love of the Union as profound as Lincoln's, Johnson put his back to the wall and fought Lincoln's fight. He, therefore inherited Lincoln's enemies. There was no war now to distract them, and so they were able to employ, and with almost incredible malice used every weapon for the defeat of Lincoln's plan and for the destruction of Lincoln's successor who was following it.[19]

Rhodes's chapter titles showed his attitude toward Johnson. Stryker's did also: "Johnson Takes Up Lincoln's Cause," "The Radicals

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. vii.

[19]Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

Lay Plans to Make Wade President by Impeaching Johnson," "Johnson Is Accused of Lincoln's Murder," "The Conspiracy Assumes Its Most Disgraceful Phase." It is little wonder that N.W. Stephenson, in the American Historical Review, called Stryker an "angry partisan."[20]

While there had been little love lost between earlier historians and Radical leaders, in Stryker's volume the Radicals reached a new low. Stryker castigated Thaddeus Stevens especially harshly. He claimed Stevens gathered "all his strength to wrong the southern states and to cause suffering to their white inhabitants." He was "an unquestioned dictator" who "wanted to get Congress to adopt their way of malice for the South." In addition to plain old vindictiveness, Stryker said Stevens was motivated by other factors: favoritism towards blacks, repugnance for the pre-Civil War Constitution, and personal retribution: "What he could understand and what he could not forget was that during the Confederate invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863, [Stevens's] iron works near Chambersburg were burned."[21]

Visible throughout the book is Stryker's attitude toward blacks. Here he was again more vehement than Winston. Winston felt that Lincoln and Johnson, in opposing white disfranchisement and Negro suffrage, astutely foresaw that white Southerners would not change their racial beliefs overnight. Radical Reconstruction bred further racial hatred, led to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, and in the long run hurt rather than

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[20]N.W. Stephenson, review of Andrew Johnson: A Study in Courage, by Lloyd Stryker, in American Historical Review 35 (October 1929):140.

[21]Stryker, Andrew Johnson, pp. 246, 231, 247.

helped blacks.[22]

Stryker stated outright that whites were thousands of years ahead of blacks in "mental capacity and moral force." He claimed that the Radicals "cared nothing for the Negro, except as the wielder of a vote that would maintain them and their friends in office." He thus concluded that in opposing the Radicals' insistence on black voting rights, Johnson showed "sound understanding of the Negro problem" as opposed to the Radicals' "spurious philanthropy." The Radicals' racial policies, he suggested, would stir up "hatreds that would endure for fifty years."[23]

Stryker concluded his book much the same way Andrew Johnson concluded his public career in the Senate a few months before his death, by attacking the Grant administration. Stryker had claimed earlier that historians treated Johnson unfairly because they could not bring themselves to condemn the Grant presidency.[24] Towards the book's finale he stated that

> . . . a full and complete portrayal of the "blunder-crime" of Reconstruction awaits the master hand of some Macaulay, Victor Hugo, Zola, or Carlyle. Someday he will come to paint the dreadful picture of the aftermath of Appomattox--the crimes against the state, the crimes against the home, the larcenies, the robberies, and the rapes, political and domestic, the prostitution of public virtue, the domination of the Negro and the adventurer. And when the awful masterpiece is done, there against a flaming background of desolation, the hopes, the aspirations, the struggles, the character and the life of Andrew Johnson will stand forth like an unscathed cross upon a smoking battlefield.[25]

The next in the string of pro-Johnson accounts was George Fort

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[22]Winston, Andrew Johnson, pp. 373-74, 513, 517.

[23]Stryker, Andrew Johnson, pp. 294, 278.

[24]Ibid., pp. 242, 822.

[25]Ibid., p. 822.

Milton's The Age of Hate: Andrew Johnson and the Radicals, published in 1930. Milton, a Tennessee native, was a newspaper editor and historian.

Milton had previewed his work in a 1928 article in The Independent. Praising Winston's book, Milton briefly summarized Johnson's life. He concluded the article by saying "Andrew Johnson was truly a magnificent American. Surely it is time that history gave him a square deal." Milton's biography paralleled his article and presumably offered that square deal. He used extensive documentation. The book's overall tone was a bit more impartial than that found in Winston's and Stryker's books, leading a later historian to praise it as "highly scrupulous," although "anchored in its time."[26]

Continuing the Johnson redemption that began with Winston and Stryker, Milton emphasized the president's good qualities. He described Johnson's boyhood, claiming his activities proved he was persistent, loved learning and hard work, and was well-read. In his philosophy Johnson "was one of the first of the Progressives, in the modern sense of the word." In short, Johnson was "a disciple of Jefferson and an apostle of Jackson."[27]

Also like Winston and Stryker, Milton carefully laid the groundwork for Johnson's exoneration by showing the Radicals' dislike for Lincoln and his policies. He asserted that in 1864 "the Radicals were

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[26]George Fort Milton, "Canonization of a Maligned President," The Independent, 1 September, 1928, pp. 201-02. For a review of the book, see Howard K. Beale, review of The Age of Hate, by George Fort Milton, in American Historical Review 36 (July 1931):837-38. For a later view, see McKitrick, Profile, pp. xiv-xv.

[27]George Fort Milton, The Age of Hate: Andrew Johnson and the Radicals (New York: Coward-McCann, 1930), p. 99.

very loath to contemplate Lincoln's renomination. They considered his first Administration a failure." Continuing this argument, he claimed that "the Radicals in Congress had shown petulance and anger over President Lincoln's views and consequent acts as to the legal status of the redeemed states." He even went so far as to imply that the Radicals were relieved when Lincoln was assassinated: ". . . the Radical leadership of the Republican party, while not pleased with the sacrifice of Lincoln, the individual, almost rejoiced that Lincoln, the merciful executive, had been removed from the helm of state."[28]

Milton did not think highly of the Radicals. He called them "cranks, fanatics, and men of extreme bitterness and rancor." He said they pressed Johnson "to abandon Lincoln's plan." However, after Johnson revealed his moderate views through his plan to readmit North Carolina, the "blood thirsty Radicals" decided to declare war. This showed "how the vehement Radicals insisted on Negro suffrage [not included in the North Carolina plan] as the crucial point of their political creed." Milton claimed that the Radical attack on Johnson was especially unfair because the Radicals were "greatly in the minority." Furthermore, Northerners did not espouse a key part of the Radical plan; Milton said "the great majority of the Republican party" opposed black suffrage.[29]

Milton was more ambiguous on the question of racial equality than Stryker had been. To him, Johnson's black suffrage stance was purely a matter of interpreting the Constitution. He said the president felt that granting the right to vote was simply not within his power. Johnson

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[28]Ibid., pp. 24, 53, 168.

[29]Ibid., pp. 32, 69, 189, 219.

opposed the Civil Rights Bill because "he could not in conscience approve a measure which he believed broke the Constitution into bits." Milton also pointed out that many of Johnson's cabinet members thought various parts of Radical proposals were unwise or unsound constitutionally.[30]

Milton, more so than Stryker, was willing to admit that the president had his faults. He said he "was afflicted with the fatal vice of hesitation" and that "this habit of indecision and delay in action cost him dear." He also said he was "unhappy in language." Nevertheless, he mostly attributed Johnson's political defeats to the Radicals. He emphasized that the Radicals had misrepresented Johnson's views and had incited damaging incidents during the "swing around the circle." Milton admitted that on a few occasions Johnson's behavior constituted a "gross breach to the office of the President."[31] However, he concluded that the bulk of the responsibility for the era's turmoil belonged to the Radicals: "It was doubtful if the words of any President of the United States have ever been so disturbed, deliberately misquoted and misconstrued as were Johnson's words in this tour."[32]

Milton summed up his views of Johnson as he described Johnson's last public message as president. Calling the message a "plea for justice and peace," Milton said it showed "the tailor-statesman's three chief public attachments--the Union, the Constitution, and the Common

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[30]Ibid., pp. 219, 308.

[31]Ibid., pp. 202, 368, 359, 363-64, 370; and Milton, "Canonization," p. 202.

[32]Milton, The Age of Hate, p. 366.

People."[33] In the message, Johnson called attention to Radical outrages and corruption. Quoting and paraphrasing the president, Milton wrote:

> "The servants of the people, in high places, have badly betrayed their trusts," [Johnson] declared. They had inflamed prejudices, retarded the restoration of peace, and "exposed to the poisonous breath of party passion the terrible wounds of a four years' war." They had engaged in class legislation, and had encouraged monopolies "that the few might be enriched at the expense of the many."[34]

But, Milton noted, Johnson's aims were different. He quoted the president's concluding words, "'Let us return to the first principles of the Government . . . the Constitution and the Union, one and inseparable.'"[35]

While the Claude Bowers book, The Tragic Era, published in 1929, was not a biography of Andrew Johnson, its portrait of Johnson was similar to that drawn by Winston, Stryker, and Milton. Also a newspaperman, Bowers wrote in a narrative (some might say melodramatic) style. Bowers did cite his sources, and these included diaries, memoirs, the Congressional Globe, and many of the books mentioned here. Also, probably because of his background, Bowers made extensive use of newspaper accounts.

Bowers began his preface by putting himself squarely within the tradition of the other pro-Johnson writers:

> Andrew Johnson, who fought the bravest battle for constitutional liberty and for the preservation of our institutions ever waged by an Executive, was until recently in the pillory to which unscrupulous gamblers forever consigned him . . . . That Johnson was maligned by his enemies because he was seeking honestly to carry out the

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[33]Ibid., p. 562.

[34]Ibid. Note that Milton made Johnson a nineteenth-century "New Dealer," a view that certainly was appealing to many in the 1930s.

[35]Ibid.

> conciliatory and wise policy of Lincoln is now generally understood, but even now few realize how intensely Lincoln was hated by the Radicals at the time of his death.[36]

Also like the others, Bowers saw the Radicals as evil villains:

> Never have American public men in responsible positions, directing the destiny of the Nation, been so brutal, hypocritical, and corrupt. The Constitution was treated as a doormat on which politicians and army officers wiped their feet after wading in the muck . . . .[37]

Like Milton, Bowers emphasized that Johnson was a champion of the common man, calling him "a radical in his democracy." Like all three other pro-Johnson writers, he stressed the president's "two passions--the Constitution and the Union." Like Milton, he admitted Johnson had good and bad traits, calling him "honest, inflexible, tender, able, forceful, and tactless."[38]

While Bowers stated early on that "it was not lack of ability, but an incurable deficiency in tact that was to curse him through life," he took exception to Milton's views and went further than either Winston or Stryker in describing the president's public appearances favorably. Of Johnson's "swing around the circle" he said, "He had traveled many miles, spoken many times, and never in bad taste." The troubles he encountered were not his fault; again, the Radicals were the culprits, inciting the mobs: "Everywhere the mob was the aggressor. . . . Newspapers and magazines teemed with misrepresentations and falsehoods."[39]

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[36]Claude G. Bowers, The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1929), p. v.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., pp. 31, 44.

[39]Ibid., pp. 43, 134, 138.

While Bowers did not go farther than the other three authors in his condemnation of the Radicals, he took a different approach, examining Thaddeus Stevens under a psychological microscope. Bowers claimed the Radical leader was a gambler who had few religious convictions. Bowers dismissed Stevens's defense of black rights as an offshoot of his long-time illicit relationship with his mulatto housekeeper. After presenting the evidence, Bowers concluded that "The mind of Stevens was not formed for constructive work."[40] This psychohistorical approach carried through the chapter on impeachment.

Bowers titled his impeachment chapter "The Great American Farce." He argued that impeachment was totally unjust. He suggested that Thaddeus Stevens might have had an eye on the presidency, despite his ill health. He implied that Ben Butler and others tried to "manufacture evidence" that Johnson was behind Lincoln's murder. To prove the Republicans were totally unscrupulous and vindictive, he mentioned that they had even taken to criticizing Lincoln's widow for her public behavior. Clearly, they had no decency at all.[41]

Stevens's bad health improved almost magically during impeachment, driven as he was "to destroy Andrew Johnson." As the trial opened, Stevens, "black and bitter," was "ready for the killing, and to him had been accorded the ecstacy of dealing the first blow." During the trial, spies and detectives tracked the movements of the few senators who

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[40]Ibid., pp. 77-78, 80-81, 83. The story of Stevens's mulatto housekeeper was related in a popular novel and movie during this era. Both "Birth of a Nation," a film, and Thomas Dixon's book The Clansman mentioned the relationship.

[41]Ibid., pp. 171, 163, 165, 168.

had not yet declared for conviction. Stevens "warned any Senator daring to vote for acquittal." Calling the Radicals "money-bearers," he said they were "prepared to buy Senators as swine." He continued, "Utterly shameless now, the impeachers had summoned the forces of intimidation to the capital." Stevens was "black with rage and disappointment" when the Senate failed to produce a two-thirds vote to convict the president. Bowers closed this chapter by quoting Stevens as he was carried from the Capitol: "'This country is going to the devil.'"[42]

Howard K. Beale's The Critical Year appeared in 1930. This was the fifth volume of the pro-Johnson series, though its approach was different. The test of time has shown that from a scholarly standpoint this was the most significant of the five.[43] One reason for this was that Beale was a professionally-trained historian who taught at both the University of North Carolina and the University of Wisconsin, institutions pre-eminent in the teaching of history. Another reason was that the book was written in an academic style and was thoroughly documented. Yet another was that the book did not seem to be mainly a Johnson apologia. But the most important reason why Beale's book continued to draw scholarly interest and academic respect over the years was that it was one of the first accounts that looked specifically at Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction through the economic "spyglass" of

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[42]Ibid., pp. 170, 176, 191, 190, 196, 192. The Bowers book proved popular with the mass reading public. It is possible that Bowers, a fervent Democrat, was motivated in part by the Republican victory in the 1928 presidential election, which marked Republic inroads in the "Solid South." What better way to tarnish the Republicans than to completely excoriate Stevens and other Reconstruction-era Republicans?

[43]Albert Castel, "Andrew Johnson: His Historiographical Rise and Fall," Mid-America 45 (July 1963):179.

Charles Beard and other Progressive historians.

Charles Beard's many works, of course, focused on the sweep of American history and not just on Reconstruction. But his landmark theory--that economic forces are the root cause of most events in American history--shed new light on the Civil War period in general. Beard's work had an enormous impact on academic historians, and, indeed, on scholars from other disciplines. His "Progressive" interpretation of American history naturally had an impact on how scholars looked at the Civil War and Reconstruction.

In Beard's 1927 book, The Rise of American Civilization, he posited his "Second American Revolution" thesis, a view that the Civil War marked a profound economic and social transformation in the United States. The transformation was the result of the ascendancy of "northern capitalists and free farmers" who "emerged from the conflict richer and more numerous than ever." The Civil War had transformed the entire North in many ways--transportation was streamlined, factories expanded to produce more goods, distribution networks were set up--so that the section's strength increased markedly. Thus, during the war, "while the planting class was being trampled in the dust--stripped of its wealth and political power--the capitalist class was marching in seven league boots."[44] To Beard the Civil War was not a war of partisan sectionalism or simple nationalism, nor was it a war of the forces of good versus evil. It was a conflict of opposing economic forces.[45]

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[44]Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization 2 vol., (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 2:99, 105.

[45]For the definitive study of historians' interpretations of the Civil War, and Beard's contribution, see Pressly, Americans Interpret.

Beard actually had very little to say about Andrew Johnson. He did assert that before his death Lincoln had received far from widespread political support for his policies, and, in fact, was "attacked on all sides." He claimed that President Johnson "proposed to follow [Lincoln] with some modifications . . . with respect to reconstruction but was blocked by a hostile group of Republicans headed by Stevens and Sumner." He implied that Johnson was a populist, calling him "that primitive agrarian . . . foe of capitalism and slavocracy alike." But, on the whole, Beard did not delve into the pro- or anti-Johnson fray.[46]

This was not the case with Beale. Beale's The Critical Year was subtitled "A Study of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction." His book drew a sympathetic picture of Johnson, but it was far from being an apologia. Instead, it was a study of Johnson and the 1866 congressional elections, and, like Beard's work, it focused on economic issues. Beale did praise Johnson, and claimed he became "more worthy of respect" upon closer examination. He extolled the president's honesty and his defense of the Constitution. He described him as "tireless" in his devotion to duty. He said Johnson was "doggedly persistent, dauntlessly courageous." But the real reason for the study was that a new chapter was needed in Reconstruction history, one that covered what other studies did not, "the larger economic and social aspects of the struggle over reconstruction."[47]

Beale claimed that Johnson, faultless in many respects, erred in

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[46]Beard, The Rise, 2:95, 119-20, 560.

[47]Howard K. Beale, The Critical Year: A Study of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930) pp. 4, 8-9, 22-23.

underestimating the economic issues that divided the nation. While he admitted that Johnson championed the common man, he claimed that he did not go far enough: "A great anti-monopoly movement was awaiting a national leader [but] Johnson failed to organize it." If he had stressed economic issues that would have cost the Radicals their western support, pro-Johnson candidates might have been elected in the 1866 elections.[48]

For Beale, the protective tariff was the most important issue. The tariff was supported by the Radicals and the eastern business interests, but those in the West generally opposed it. Johnson, an agrarian, also opposed it, but he failed to capitalize politically on the issue. Instead, despite the urgings of some of his advisors, he let the issue stay in the background.[49] Beale said that if Johnson

> had followed his bent and launched into the campaign an attack upon the economic views of the Eastern wing of the Radical Party, had he used his "swing 'round the Circle'" to arouse the West upon this subject, he could have marshalled all the latent discontent of the West to his support and could have split the Radical Party at one blow.[50]

He concluded that the president's failure to do so "was a fatal error in political judgment."[51]

Despite that criticism, the Beale view stands as pro-Johnson when viewed as a whole. While he showed that Johnson displayed poor political judgment, he pointed out that bad luck and the vindictive Radicals were the primary reasons for Johnson's failure to win support in the 1866

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[48]Ibid., pp. 265, 299, 270-71, 7-9.

[49]Ibid., pp. 271-274, 297, 299.

[50]Ibid., p. 299.

[51]Ibid.

elections. The Radicals not only were able to keep economic issues in the background during the campaign, they were also able to mount a skillful "campaign of abuse and misrepresentation." They identified Johnson with the South, and the South with distrust, dishonor and disunity. They "used newspapers, speeches, pamphleteering, and the machinery of the old abolitionist cause." They preyed upon post-Civil War bitterness and fear. They used "claptrap, and vituperation against the 'Copperheadism' of all friends of the South." They met Johnson's campaign speeches with "misrepresentation and ridicule." The entire election was a "Radical campaign of ridicule."[52]

Unfortunately for Andrew Johnson, race riots in New Orleans and Memphis "gave the Radicals at an opportune moment just the campaign material they needed."[53] The Radicals stepped up their attack, and they emerged victorious in the elections. Beale concluded that the election was not "a popular referendum" on Johnson. Nor was Johnson's defeat his fault:

> A study of that campaign shows that the Radicals forced their program upon the South by an evasion of issues and the clever use of propaganda in an election where a majority of the voters would have supported Johnson's policy had they been given a chance to express their preference on an issue squarely faced.[54]

Beale, then, clearly was pro-Johnson in his attitudes, but his approach was different from Milton's, Stryker's, Winston's, and Bowers's. He obviously admired Johnson, and just as obviously disliked the Radicals. But his view was not a simplistic one of vindictive Radicals

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[52]Ibid., pp. 76, 65-66, 139, 300-01, 362, 367-69.

[53]Ibid., p. 343.

[54]Ibid., p. 406.

versus a good-hearted president. He pictured a nation whose destiny was determined by economic interests. Johnson could have won by appealing to those interests politically. He failed to do so, and the Radical position prevailed, which in effect excluded the South and its interests from participating in policy-making regarding tariffs and other economic issues.

Beale turned Johnson into a populist, and this proved popular with historians during the 1930s, the 1940s, and into the 1950s. Beale's work was also more "professional" and less apologetic; mainstream historians certainly seemed more accepting of it. Doctrinaire Marxist historians and political scientists would still have their say on Andrew Johnson during this period. But, in essence, according to a later historian, "for the next twenty-five or thirty years it did not seem that anything new needed to be said about Andrew Johnson, and virtually nothing was."[55] Most works written during the remainder of the 1927-1960 period showed acceptance of the pro-Johnson view.

There were economic determinists who, unlike Beard and Beale, were critical of Andrew Johnson. Marxists W.E.B. DuBois and James S. Allen both wrote accounts of Reconstruction during the 1930s. DuBois sharply criticized Andrew Johnson because Johnson's policies did not include full equality for blacks. He described the Johnson policy as "Damn the Nigger." He claimed Johnson would not, and could not "include negroes in any conceivable democracy" because he was "a poor white, steeped in the limitations, prejudices, and ambitions of his social class

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[55]McKitrick, Profile, p. xvi; and T. Harry Williams, "An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes," Journal of Southern History 12 (November 1946):469-86.

. . . ." That the president would not give blacks political rights was bad enough in itself, but DuBois also asserted that the post-Civil War era saw "the world delivered to plutocracy." While Johnson was a champion of the white common man, he could not side with a post-war laboring class that would include former slaves. Therefore, he had to side with the South's former slaveholders in framing his Reconstruction policy. The political battles that Johnson precipitated resulted in the North's eventual capitulation on the matter of race. Big Business in the North sided thereafter with the former "slave barons." DuBois concluded that "democracy in the nation was done to death" and "race provincialism deified." While it meant a reversal of his democratic instincts, "the man who led the way with unconscious paradox and contradiction was Andrew Johnson."[56]

James S. Allen's view of the Civil War and Reconstruction was similar to Beard's in some respects. Allen thought the Civil War was part of the nation's economic transformation. However, while for Beard the Civil War was a transition (albeit a "revolutionary" one), Allen, like most Marxists, saw revolution and class conflict as the key to all history. The Civil War thus paved the way "for real national unity and the further development of capitalism, which would produce conditions most favorable for the growth of the labor movement." The labor movement would lead in turn to a revolution of the proletariat. Ironically, Andrew Johnson helped along the revolutionary cause by inciting

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[56]W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1888 (New York: Russell, 1935) pp. 268, 242, 24, 237. DuBois titled the chapter on Johnson the "Transubstantiation of a Poor White."

divisiveness. Clearly, to Allen, Johnson was no friend of the freedman, and he abandoned poor white Southerners. Allen condemned "Jefferson Davis Johnson," and pointed out that the New Orleans race riots were a direct result of his policies.[57]

DuBois, Allen, and other socialists and Marxists were voices crying in the wilderness. The question of racial equality continued to lie dormant in the 1930s, making Johnson's racial policies acceptable. While the Progressive Era saw economic determinism gain popularity, it was the Beardian variety, not the Marxist, that was acceptable. To a generation of politicians and scholars interested in reform but not revolution, Andrew Johnson was more a hero than a villain.

Some other works appeared in the 1930s that upheld the positive view of Andrew Johnson. One was yet another Civil War diary that reinforced the Welles view of Johnson. The other was a book that echoed in some respects the Milton-Winston-Bowers view.

Secretary of the Interior Orville Hickman Browning served under Johnson. His Diary appeared in 1933, and he depicted Johnson in much the same way McCulloch and Welles had. While not totally sympathetic, he concluded that Johnson followed the program most likely to restore the nation and that he had "done more, periled more, and suffered more for the country than any of his revilers."[58] It's interesting to note that the diaries of three cabinet members, Welles, McCulloch, and Browning,

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[57]James Stewart Allen, Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy (1865-1876) (New York: International Publishers, 1937), pp. 26-28, 868.

[58]Orville Hickman Browning, The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning 2 vols., (Springfield, IL: The Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1933), 2:9, 71.

were similarly positive. Those closest to Johnson seemed to be in substantial agreement. While Browning's book broke no new ground, it did reinforce the pro-Johnson view of the 1930s.

Paul Buck's Pulitzer Prize winning The Road to Reunion essentially followed the Milton-Winston-Bowers perspective in its view of Johnson. Published in 1937, it claimed that Lincoln and Johnson had followed the same plan, one which assumed that the popular attitude was "a desire for leniency." Johnson, however, was a victim of the Radicals' "Juggernaut of propaganda." They flooded the country with "partisan accounts" and incited old Civil War hatreds. The result, Buck said, was "disorder, worse than war, and oppression unequaled in American annals."[59]

J.G. Randall's authoritative text, The Civil War and Reconstruction, also appeared in 1937. It was also pro-Johnson, but it was more sophisticated in its approach. Randall, a seminal figure in Civil War historiography, was a "revisionist." He "revised" the prevailing view that the Civil War was inevitable, a view that had been accepted since the war itself. Some historians thought the war was caused by a conspiracy of slaveowners; some thought it was caused by the North's vindictiveness; Beale and others attributed the war to the ascendancy of capitalism. Whatever the reason, nearly all previous scholars had agreed that the war was irrepressible.

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[59]Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion 1865-1900 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937), pp. 5, 21, 25. Buck's book aimed at showing how Northerners and Southerners had slowly reunited and "forgiven" each other for the Civil War. The pro-Johnson, anit-Radical view could be seen as part of this reunification: the South was responsible for slavery and the war; the North was responsible for the Reconstruction debacle.

Randall, along with fellow historian Avery Craven, said the war was needless. Both scholars were undoubtedly influenced by the 1930s-era disillusionment that followed World War I, the so-called "war to end all wars" that had led to economic collapse and the rise of totalitarianism. To Craven and Randall, war was irrational, organized murder. They recognized that the pre-Civil War period was filled with sectional differences but they claimed these could have been solved peacefully. The trouble was that the differences had been magnified into emotional issues of epic proportion. The culprits were the reformers, politicians, and extremists who had stirred up emotions.[60]

It is little surprise, then, that Randall had little admiration for either the Radicals or the abolitionists. He said the abolitionists had been an "avenging force of puritanism in politics" and that they were "a major cause of the conflict." The Radicals, Randall claimed, "violently interrupted" Johnson's plan for a peaceful transition to "normal policy in the South." Randall concluded that Radical schemes and propaganda created the political situation that assured Johnson's defeat. He also praised Johnson for his courage and his defense of the common man.[61]

Randall's book differed from many of the pro-Johnson biographies in aim, scope, and methodology. But the fact that Johnson emerged unscathed reinforced the prevailing, very positive view. Combined with the impact of Beale's work, the success and acceptance of Randall's book

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[60]Pressly, Americans Interpret, p. 314.

[61]James G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1937), pp. 146, 854, 719, 741.

by the academic community meant that a positive view of Johnson would continue to prevail.

Andrew Johnson would not be the specific focus of a major historical work during the rest of the 1940s and 1950s. But political scientists and scholars from other disciplines "discovered" him, and several books and articles appeared during this time that added dimensions to the once-maligned president's reputation.[62]

Herbert Agar's volume on U.S. presidents continued a favorable if not entirely uncritical view of Andrew Johnson. He pictured Johnson as a "Jacksonian Democrat, a champion of the common man." He agreed with many of the era's historians that Johnson tried to carry out Lincoln's policies but that he was thwarted by vindictive Radicals, who were bent on continuing their "hard-won economic measures" through political supremacy ensured by black suffrage. He dismissed blacks as lazy do-nothings who "had taken to lounging about and playing banjos while waiting for the Federal Government to provide them each with forty acres and a mule."[63]

Agar did admit that Johnson "behaved in a grossly undignified way" during the 1866 congressional elections. But the Radicals trumped

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[62]Two additional biographies did appear at this period: Milton Lomask, Andrew Johnson: President on Trial (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1960); and Margaret Shaw Royall, Andrew Johnson--Presidential Scapegoat: A Biographical Re-evaluation (New York: Exposition Press, 1958). According to Albert Castel, these essentially followed the views of Beale, Bowers, and Milton, and contributed nothing new about Johnson. See Castel, "Andrew Johnson," p. 180.

[63]Herbert Agar, The People's Choice from Washington to Harding (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933), pp. 200, 203, 205-06.

up hatred of him and he lost public favor.[64] The author concluded that

> Johnson was broken for trying to win fair treatment for the South and to maintain the power of the Executive. He helped defeat himself by his rashness and ill-temper; but public opinion in the North was against the conciliatory policy, and it is not unlikely that Lincoln, had he lived, would have been broken in the same cause.[65]

Like Agar, British political scientist Harold Laski was also interested in Johnson's resistance to congressional efforts to weaken executive power. He explained that the first eighty years of U.S. government were characterized by policies that "did not disturb those conditions of confidence which businessmen approved." Congress, especially the Senate (a "rich man's club") sought to continue those policies in the post-Civil War era, and in so doing attempted to strengthen its powers and diminish those of the president. Andrew Johnson represented a threat because his policies disturbed "the fulfillment of the triumph of the industrial North against the agrarian South."[66]

Johnson was important, Laski concluded, because he resisted Congress. While Congress momentarily gained power over Johnson and the presidency, the failure of impeachment, later presidential action, and Supreme Court decisions restored the balance. "Johnson's experience," he said, had "vast repercussions . . . on American history," and is "important evidence of what the system of checks and balances can effect." Admiring Johnson's courageous defense of presidential power

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[64]Ibid., pp. 206-07.

[65]Ibid., p. 208.

[66]Harold J. Laski, The American Presidency, An Interpretation (New York: Harper, 1940), pp. 124, 154, 157-58.

against an encroaching legislature, Laski said, "It is unlikely that presidential courage will again encounter so bitter a fate as Andrew Johnson."[67]

By 1948, the Oval Office had been occupied by seven presidents who had assumed power upon the death of a president. Then-president Harry Truman had followed that path. Perhaps with that in mind, Klyde Young, Lamar Middleton, and Peter Levin wrote political and historical studies of the vice presidency. Both were published that year.

While Young and Middleton's view was not as strongly pro-Johnson as some earlier works, it certainly fell within the rubric of sympathy that characterized the "canonization" era of Andrew Johnson's reputation. They found much to admire in Johnson, though his impolitic behavior "widened the breach" with Congress. Speaking strictly about his performance as vice president, they concluded he was "a man of strong convictions and his figure and character stand out sharply against the succession of Vice-Presidential lightweights."[68]

Peter Levin paid tribute to Johnson's loyalty, courage, honesty, and defense of the common man. But there were cracks in Levin's image of the president. Through these cracks we can see not only the remnants of earlier criticism, but also the outline of criticism that would come later. Levin claimed Johnson's plan was unfair to blacks as well as politically unsound. Like Dunning and Kendrick, Levin said Johnson erred when he failed early on to cooperate with congressional moderates.

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[67]Ibid., p. 24.

[68]Klyde Young and Lamar Middleton, Heirs Apparent, the Vice Presidents of the United States (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1948), pp. 174-75, 171.

Johnson could have traded approval of the Freedman's Bureau and Civil Rights bills for his lenient plan to readmit the southern states. Johnson's vetoes only drove the moderates to side with the Radicals. Overall, Johnson missed opportunities to guide Congress in a moderate direction.[69] A few years later David Donald would take a similar position.

Levin called Johnson's story a tragedy with "overtones of Greek drama." He said he was a "better than average man." But he had a "tragic flaw" in his character: "His faith was too narrow. He stood by the common man but he would not admit the freed Negro into that fraternity."[70] This was one of the first times Johnson's racial attitudes were attacked since the accounts written by the Radicals themselves were published.

Two 1954 articles, from different perspectives, fell for the most part in the pro-Johnson tradition. They showed that the pro-Johnson view had crossed the English Channel to reach English historians and that the American legal profession had been influenced by it as well.

English historian James Russell discussed Andrew Johnson in a British journal, History Today. In it he claimed Johnson had been unjustly maligned. He described the president as "mentally well-favored" and a "champion of the common people." Russell summarized Johnson's rapid political rise, which he termed an "astonishing story of success." He pointed out that "Johnson's progress was so rapid that he must have

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[69]Peter R. Levin, Seven By Chance: The Accidental Presidents (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1948), pp. 129, 131.

[70]Ibid., p. 144.

possessed unusual talents." Far from being the country hick and bumbling politician his critics had pictured, Johnson was a man "of popular appeal and great shrewdness in the judgment of political questions."

But Russell's view was not an apologia. While he concluded that "factors beyond the President's control" were the primary cause of his failure, Johnson had to "bear a measure of responsibility." His mistakes included offensive public appearances, an overconfidence that led to a disregard for his advisors' counsel, and, as Beale and later Levin had pointed out, he missed opportunities to outmaneuver the Radicals politically.[71]

Russell departed from the pro-Johnson view by being critical of both Johnson's and the Radicals' racial policies. In so doing he lambasted U.S. racial policies prevalent in the early 1950s. Russell said the Radical plan for black equality was sound, in terms of what the blacks would receive, but, echoing Dunning and others, that the Radicals' motives in adopting it were mostly political. As for the president, Russell said he stood for "white supremacy in the South." The bitterness of the Johnson-Congress struggle ruined the good feelings between the races that had been "generated largely by the exemplary behavior of the Negroes during the Civil War." The result was ruinous for the blacks, retarded political progress in general, and "condemned the southern whites to a period of single party government substantially unbroken until 1952."[72]

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[71]James F.S. Russell, "President Andrew Johnson," History Today 4 (September 1954):618-20, 622, 623-24.

[72]Ibid., p. 626.

Russell claimed that it was unfortunate that Johnson was remembered earlier mostly because of his impeachment and his drinking. He claimed that this was unfair to Johnson personally. He pointed out that by the 1950s the United States had embraced Johnson's vision, which was a nation characterized by "political democracy, an undivided Union and white supremacy in the South." With a detachment only a foreign observer could have, Russell concluded that Andrew Johnson had earlier been maligned or ignored because he did not fit the three political traditions that have prevailed in the United States. These were the southern tradition (Johnson opposed secession), the Whig/Republican tradition (Johnson opposed government aid to business), and the Jacksonian-FDR Democratic tradition (Johnson did not quit the Democratic party when it became the "guardian of slave property"). Hence, he concluded, "Andrew Johnson is today, as he was in the White House, a President without a party."[73]

H.H. Walker Lewis summarized Johnson's life and gave an account of the impeachment proceedings in a 1954 issue of the American Bar Association Journal. A Harvard-educated attorney, Lewis was clearly within the pro-Johnson school. His intent, though, was not to glorify the president but to emphasize the legal ramifications of the impeachment trial. In the process of doing so, he showed that he accepted the Winston-Stryker-Milton view that lauded Johnson. Saying the president was a man of "outstanding intelligence, independence and courage," he pointed out that Johnson was only trying to "carry out Lincoln's policy." Congress resisted, because "the Radical Republicans . . . were determined

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[73]Ibid., pp. 618, 626.

to punish the rebel states." Impeachment was the result. Like other political scientists, Walker emphasized the "clash between legislative and executive power" that characterized the Johnson presidency. "The outcome of the proceedings," he said, "has had a more profound effect upon our form of government than it had upon President Johnson himself." That effect was the continuation of a strong Executive, and the repudiation of impeachment as a political tool.[74]

Works discussed above, from Agar to Walker, showed that scholars and professionals from several fields had been influenced by the pro-Johnson view. The popularity of another work showed that in the mid-1950s the view was still accepted. This work was Senator John F. Kennedy's Profiles in Courage. A book-length version of an honors paper he had written while a Harvard undergraduate, the book sold well and went through several printings.

Kennedy profiled several American men who had taken courageous stands of one form or another during troubled times in American history. Many were little-known, and, Kennedy implied, deserved more attention and respect than they had received. Edmund G. Ross, the Republican senator who had cast the deciding "not guilty" vote during Johnson's impeachment trial, was one of those included. Quoting Bowers, DeWitt, Dunning, Walker, Lewis, and Welles, Kennedy presented the prevailing pro-Johnson view. President Johnson was determined to carry out Abraham Lincoln's policies. Lincoln had already clashed with "extremists in Congress" who

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[74]H.H. Walker Lewis, "The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson," American Bar Association Journal 40 (January 1954):15-16. An interesting note added by Lewis was his mention that one of Johnson's lawyers, a former Supreme Court Justice, had been one of two dissenting justices in the Dred Scott decision.

"sought to make the Legislative Branch of the government supreme."[75]

Johnson had his faults, Kennedy conceded. He was "courageous if untactful" and had a "beligerant temperament." But these faults paled in comparison with the Radicals. They were led by Thaddeus Stevens, "the crippled, fanatical personification of the extremes of the Radical Republican movement, master of the House of Representatives, with a mouth like the thin edge of ax."[76]

Impeachment was grossly unfair: "Telling evidence in the President's favor was arbitrarily excluded . . . . The chief interest was not in the trial or the evidence, but in the tallying of the votes for conviction." Ross and the other doubtful Republicans were "daily pestered, spied upon, and subjected to every form of pressure." Before the first Senate vote, Ross was "warned in the presence of Stevens that a vote for acquittal would mean trumped up charges and his political death." It is little wonder that Ross, when giving his first "not guilty" verdict, said, "'I almost literally looked down into my open grave.'"[77]

Kennedy surmised that Ross risked his career to preserve the power of the presidency and prevent the tyranny of a majority in Congress from transforming government into a "partisan congressional autocracy." Ross's career was ruined, as were the careers of the other six Republican acquitters. Kennedy concluded by saying all seven were worthy of respect

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[75]John F. Kennedy, Profiles in Courage (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), pp. 126-27.

[76]Ibid., pp. 126, 131.

[77]Ibid., pp. 132-33, 135, 137, 139.

rather than the ridicule that followed them the remainder of their lives.[78]

The Kennedy book, based for the most part on a selective group of secondary works, added nothing new to the body of work pertaining to Andrew Johnson's image. But the book's popularity meant that his view of Ross, and its accompanying pro-Johnson view, were read by a wide audience.

Presidential rankings have been popular in the last forty years. The 1940s and 1950s saw two rankings that vindicated Johnson. While neither ranked him at the top, they continued the pro-Johnson trend.

The first was a 1948 survey conducted for Life by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr. He polled fifty-five historians and political scientists, including Paul Buck and George Fort Milton. Each ranked the presidents as great, near-great, average, below average, and failure. William Henry Harrison and James Garfield were excluded because of their extremely short terms of office. Then-President Truman was also excluded.[79]

Johnson did not place as either great or near great. He was ranked in the average category. This ranking, though not at the top, probably would have surprised Rhodes and some of the earlier historians. While Schlesinger offered little in the way of analysis for any but those ranked "great," he did mention that "the presence of Andrew Johnson in the [average] circle is a tribute to his purposes rather than to his

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[78]Ibid., p. 141.

[79]Arthus M. Schlesinger, "The U.S. Presidents" Life, 1 November 1948. THe findings were later summarized in Schlesinger, Paths to the Present (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

performance." Schlesinger pointed out that Johnson suffered in the ranking because he followed Lincoln, the only president labeled "great" by all survey participants. Grant, a hero to some early Johnson detractors, was ranked "failure."[80]

In 1956, Clinton Rossiter ranked the presidents in his book, The American Presidency. He chose eight "great" presidents and six "strong but not great" presidents. Johnson was among them. While others not among those six were better than Johnson "from a technical point of view . . . none was so important to the history of the Presidency."[81]

Rossiter, like Agar, Laski, and Lewis, praised Johnson for resisting an encroaching Congress. Johnson did not cause the problems with Congress himself; he "was left to reap the wild wind that Lincoln had sowed unconcernedly" when he permitted the War Department and the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War to "strike up an intimate relationship." Johnson, "a man of few talents but much courage" took over and took on Congress. The failed impeachment proceedings, "political in motivation and purpose . . . made clear for all time that impeachment is not . . . a political process for turning out a President." Rossiter concluded that contrary to early twentieth century views, Johnson's "protests against the ravages of the Radicals in Congress were a high rather than a low point in the progress of the Presidency."[82]

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[80]Ibid., pp. 98-100; Schlesinger, "Presidents," p. 29.

[81]Clinton Rossiter, The American Presidency (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), pp. 79-80.

[82]Ibid., pp. 101, 106, 52. Rossiter made a modern-day parallel, calling Truman "a highly successful Andrew Johnson," p. 157.

As this period in the waxing and waning of Andrew Johnson's scholarly reputation drew to a close, another historian added a final note. Andrew Johnson had played the guiltless saint of Stryker, Milton, Winston, and Bowers; the ensemble actor in Beard's and Beale's drama of economic determinism, and the black-hating villain in a side act by DuBois, Allen, and the Marxists. His persona in the works of the later writers was generally positive, though not whitewashed. The era would end, before the deluge of Eric McKitrick's writing, with an article by David Donald. Donald, like Levin, dared to be less positive while staying within a mainstream approach.

David Donald, Mississippi-born, was Randall's favorite graduate student. In a 1956 American Heritage article he differed sharply from the overall pro-Johnson view that, with only a few exceptions, had prevailed since the late 1920s. His argument contained elements of earlier works but also suggested that another major Johnson revision was to come. Because the article was written for a popular rather than a scholarly audience, it was not extensively documented. Nor was the argument developed at length. For that reason it is included here as a harbinger of things to come. Nevertheless, the article did have an impact. As recently as May 1986 historian Eric Foner said the article was a "masterful analysis" and that it "probably influenced the writing of academic history more than any other in American Heritage's early years."[83]

Donald's argument was similar to Rhodes's in several respects.

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[83]Eric Foner, Review of A Sense of History, by Byron Dobell, ed., in History Book Club Review (n.p., May 1986).

Donald claimed Johnson was "temperamentally unable" to mount an effective Reconstruction program. His "lack of discretion" ruined whatever good will he might have enjoyed when he took office. He had a "deep-seated feeling of insecurity" that made it impossible for him to compromise. Furthermore, he behaved indecisively, making his stand on the issues difficult to anticipate. When he did make up his mind, "his mind was immovably closed" and he "defended his course with all the obstinacy of a weak man."[84]

His greatest weakness, Donald said, "was his insensitivity to public opinion." Donald said Johnson felt that he could defy Congress in the Jacksonian tradition of defending the cause of the common people. But Johnson differed from Jackson in one important way: he did not have the people's support. Because he continued on his defiant course without public support, the result was "suicidal."[85]

Like Rhodes and others of that era, Donald suggested Lincoln could have accomplished a lenient Reconstruction through the force of his "enormous presence." However, he agreed with Schouler, Beale, and other pro-Johnson writers in that he also ascribed to others some of the responsibility for the Reconstruction debacle. He blamed ex-Confederates for failing to make a good-faith effort to abandon pre-war ideals; the freedman, who "confused liberty with license"; anti-slavery extremists, for inflaming public opinion; and "land speculators, treasury grafters

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[84]David Donald, "Why They Impeached Andrew Johnson," American Heritage, December 1956, pp. 22-24.

[85]Ibid.

and railroad promoters" who were out to profit from some of the programs.[86]

In a new vein, Donald refused to accept the argument that the Radicals had been motivated by vindictiveness. He said that Northerners in general were not vindictive, but "most felt that the rebellion they had crushed must never rise again." He reasoned that it was "political exigency, not misguided sentimentality nor vindictiveness, which united Republicans in opposition to the President."[87] He took issue with the view that a tiny minority of Republicans had driven through the harsh Reconstruction measures:

> Johnson's defenders have pictured Radical Reconstruction as the work of a fanatical minority, led by Sumner and Stevens, who drove their reluctant colleagues into adopting coercive measures against the South. In fact, every major piece of Radical legislation was adopted by the nearly unanimous vote of the entire Republican membership of Congress. Andrew Johnson had left them no other choice.[88]

Donald admitted that black suffrage was perhaps an extreme measure for the South to accept, and he maintained that "Republicans . . . unwillingly came to see Negro suffrage as the only counterweight against [unrepentant] Democratic majorities in the South."[89]

The most novel aspect of Donald's argument, though, had to do with the cohesiveness of the Radicals before 1866. This is the concept that would be developed more fully by McKitrick and others during the next era of Johnson scholarship. Donald rejected the notion of Milton,

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[86]Ibid., p. 103.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid., p. 25.

Stryker, and others that Radical opposition had solidified before Lincoln's death. "In 1865," he said, "the Republicans had no clearly defined attitude toward Reconstruction." He concluded that the Republicans, a diverse group, "came slowly to adopt the idea of a harsh Reconstruction, but Johnson's stubborn persistence in his policy left them no alternative."[90]

In the end, the major responsibility for his political failure rested with Johnson himself. Donald said the Radicals' success "was due to the failure of constructive statesmanship that could channel the magnanimous feelings shared by most Americans into a positive program of reconstruction." Johnson had failed "to reason with public opinion," was unwilling to compromise, and had "sacrificed all influence with the party which had elected him." He concluded that while the Senate had failed to convict the president during impeachment, "before the bar of history itself, Andrew Johnson must be impeached with an even greater charge--that through political ineptitude he threw away a magnificent opportunity."[91]

As the 1950s drew to a close, Andrew Johnson's image, resurrected and glorified in the late 1920s, began to tarnish. There were many reasons for Johnson's thirty-year redemption. The Progressive Era's emphasis on corruption and post-World War I disillusionment with war in general made Johnson's behavior and policies not only palatable but heroic. The economic interpretation of history was popular, and the

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[90]Ibid., pp. 25, 103.

[91]Ibid.

economic determinism of Beard and Beale exonerated Johnson, defender of the common man. Johnson's reluctance to give full political rights to blacks did not bother a generation of historians who either openly espoused the concept of black inferiority or did not address the issue. Then, too, by the 1930s the collection of primary sources concerning the Reconstruction period was virtually complete. Sources not available to earlier historians vindicated Johnson.

Things began to change in the 1950s. Historical fashion changes, like any other, and new approaches supplant old. In the next era, the psychological approach would come into vogue and Johnson would not fare as well. But the biggest reason for the coming change in Johnson's reputation was changing attitudes toward race. The 1954 Supreme Court decision on school desegregation, the beginnings of the civil rights movement in the South, and changing attitudes in general would lead to a reexamination of Johnson and his role in Reconstruction.[92]

Historians of the "canonization and after" period tended to base their adulation, or at least acceptance, on the premise that Johnson's Reconstruction policy and his opposition to black rights had been correct. Once black equality and the injustice of racial discrimination became the prevailing belief, Johnson's historical reputation had no place to go but down.

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[92]See Castel, "Andrew Johnson," pp. 182-83. Also, for a general view of what historians had and had not overlooked in the 1920s and 1930s, see Howard K. Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," American Historical Review 45 (July 1940):807-27.

CHAPTER IV

1960-1973: ANDREW JOHNSON, OUTSIDER

The year 1961 was a significant one for American Civil War and Reconstruction historiography. J.G. Randall's important work, The Civil War and Reconstruction, was issued in revised form by David Donald. This text was widely used, and had presented the prevailing view; in Randall's earlier versions, he blamed the abolitionists for starting the Civil War and the Radicals for causing the divisiveness and bitterness of Reconstruction. In Donald's substantially rewritten 1961 edition, however, the guilt was not that clearly defined. Obviously a change in the prevailing view was taking place.[1]

Part of the reason was the changing leadership of the historical profession. Those writing in the late 1920s and early 1930s were retired or nearing retirement. The melodramatic version of Reconstruction, as told by Melton, Stryker, Winston, and Bowers, was fading from prominence.[2] The less impassioned Beale/Beard economic interpretation,

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[1]J.G. Randall and David Donald The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2nd. ed., revised, (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1969), pp. 566-617, especially pp. 568, 586.

[2]David Donald had pointed out in 1956 that the Civil War had always inspired melodrama: "As all good historians are frustrated dramatists, there have been many attempts to supply the necessary villainous relief. . . . In Abraham Lincoln [they have] the ideal hero, but the purity of the President's motives could best shine in contrast with the blackness of others' motives." For many years, the Radicals supplied that "villainous relief." Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered, 2nd ed., (New York:

while generally accepted, was ripe for revision.[3] Probably another reason for Donald's revised view was the 1960 publication of the latest monograph on Andrew Johnson. Eric McKitrick's Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction moved the historical profession squarely away from the pro-Johnson, anti-Radical view of Reconstruction that had prevailed from the late 1920s into the 1950s.

There had been harbingers of this shift in the early and mid-1950s, most notably Peter Levin's book and David Donald's own article. In addition to Levin's and Donald's suggestive works, a few other historians had written essays urging scholars to reexamine the prevailing view of Reconstruction. Since the immediate post-Reconstruction period, except in the writings of the Radicals themselves, most writers showed acceptance of the notion that the Radicals and Radical Reconstruction were almost wholly without merit. To many if not most historians, from Rhodes to Schouler to Milton to Buck, the Radicals had committed a multitude of sins. One of the most grievous was an attempt to lead the nation into an era of racial equality. Brushing aside the race question, Beale and Beard emphasized the negative aspects of the Radicals' economic policies. It was time, thought some historians, to look again.

As early as 1939, Francis B. Simkins had identified then-prevailing racial beliefs as the reason for the uncritical acceptance of an anti-Radical view. In a Journal of Southern History article he stated that "the main issue of the Reconstruction period, the great American race question" would not go away. He asked historians to consider

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Random House, 1956), pp. 103-04.

[3]McKitrick, Profile, p. xvi, and Williams, "An Analysis," pp. 469-86.

Reconstruction without automatically assuming that extending black civil rights was a crime. He urged others in his profession to look at history with a "critical, creative, and tolerant attitude."[4]

The following year, Howard K. Beale himself had urged a reconsideration of Reconstruction on two counts. Echoing Simkins, he said "It would seem that it is now time for a younger generation of southern historians to cease lauding those who 'restored white supremacy.'" Instead, he urged scholars "to begin analyzing the restorationists' interests to see just what they stood for in opposing the Radicals." Was it not time, he asked, that

> . . . we studied the history of Reconstruction without first assuming, at least subconsciously, that carpet-baggers and Southern white Republicans were wicked, that Negroes were illiterate incompetents, and that the whole South owes a debt of gratitude to the restorers of "white supremacy"?[5]

In the same article, Beale also urged closer examination of the economic factors involved in Reconstruction. In effect, he urged scholars to expand upon the work he had already begun in The Critical Year.[6]

Chapter III of this study showed that few historians heeded Simkins's and Beale's advice in the 1940s and early 1950s. Ironically, Beale himself had probably contributed to the reluctance to do so. In The Critical Year he had presented his economic theory so persuasively that, as later historians pointed out, he led scholars to uncritically

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[4]Francis B. Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History 5 (February 1939):49.

[5]Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," p. 808.

[6]Ibid., pp. 810, 814, 827.

accept the economic interpretation.[7] Also, as Beard had done, Beale glossed over racial issues in an attempt to focus on the economic causes of Reconstruction. Scholars of his era followed suit. Only DuBois and a few others had criticized Beale and Beard for leading historians away from confronting the race issue in Reconstruction.

In a 1959 article, Bernard Weisberger pointed out that changing racial attitudes and social changes in general were making the time ripe for a reevaluation of Reconstruction. According to Weisberger, a reevaluation had not been possible earlier because of several trends in historical scholarship: an avoidance of confronting the "nettle of race conflict"; the uncritical acceptance of the "abnormal corruption" of Reconstruction; the treatment of Reconstruction as an "isolated episode in federal-state relations"; the narrow and "intellectually isolated" view of looking just at economic or social matters; and a reluctance of the historical profession to "subject itself to the same discriminating analysis which it applies to the documents of history" in identifying each historian's own biases.[8] He concluded that

> Underlying the problem is the fact that Reconstruction confronts American writers of history with things they prefer, like other Americans, to ignore--brute power and its manipulation, class conflict, race antagonism.[9]

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[7]Robert P. Sharkey, Money, Class and Party: An Economic Study of the Civil War and Reconstruction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), pp. 303-04. Obviously, the popularity of the Progressive outlook in general greatly contributed to the uncritical acceptance of Beale's work.

[8]Bernard A. Weisberger, "The Dark and Bloody Ground of Reconstruction Historiography," Journal of Southern History 25 (November 1959): 436, 439, 442, 444.

[9]Ibid., p. 446.

From 1900 to 1960 Andrew Johnson had served as a foil for scholars' views of the Radicals and their Reconstruction program. Rhodes and other scholars of his era had looked at the end result of Reconstruction--corruption, turmoil, the unsuccessful and sometimes tragic attempt to foster racial equality--and blamed Johnson, whose inability to compromise led to Radical ascendancy and the imposition of those policies. Milton and his contemporaries also started with a negative view of the outcome, but blamed the Radicals, who had victimized Johnson on their way to steamrolling their bad policy. A reexamination of Reconstruction, then, meant almost by definition a reexamination of Andrew Johnson's role.

The pro-Johnson, anti-Radical view of Reconstruction that prevailed from the late 1920s to the 1950s was based on several assumptions. One was that since blacks were inferior, the nation was not ready for racial equality. Therefore, Johnson's racial policies were correct and the Radicals' policies were wrong. Another was that Johnson followed Lincoln's lenient plan, and, if Lincoln was right (and how could a saint be wrong?), Johnson must have been too. The lenient plan was best. A third was that the Radicals were strongly united, which pitted them forcefully against Johnson. A corollary to that was that the united Radicals joined with Northern business interests to form a monolith so powerful that no force, political or otherwise, could overcome it. The final assumption, also a corollary to the third, was that the Radicals, individually and collectively, were motivated by personal vindictiveness so intense that it distorted their political judgment and had a lasting influence on the next twenty years of politics.

If any of those assumptions were dispelled, the pro-Johnson, anti-Radical view of Reconstruction would be weakened. The decade of the 1960s would bring with it scholars with enlightened racial attitudes, scholars who were willing to study closely election results and voting records of the era's politicians, and, in general, a generation of scholars farther removed from the Reconstruction era than those in the 1930s and 1940s had been. These developments would not bode well for Andrew Johnson's reputation.

Several articles and monographs published in the 1958-1960 period foreshadowed McKitrick's influential book. Almost every one dispelled one or more of the conclusions drawn by the previous era's writers.

Jack B. Scrogg's "Southern Reconstruction: A Radical View" appeared in a 1958 issue of the Journal of Southern History. In it, he examined correspondence between southern Republicans and northern Radicals during Reconstruction. His conclusion took issue with the previously prevailing view of Johnson and Reconstruction on two counts. First, he claimed that the southern Republicans witnessed the actions of so many recalcitrant Southerners that they were genuinely alarmed by Johnson's lenient Reconstruction plan. They wrote the northern Radicals of their fears, and, although not wholly responsible for changing the attitude of Congress, "these pleas undoubtedly exerted considerable interest in crystallizing congressional action against the relatively lenient policies of President Johnson." Perhaps, Scroggs suggested, Johnson's (and Lincoln's?) lenient plan was wrong, and the South, indeed,

needed a stronger Reconstruction plan.[10]

Second, Scroggs pointed out that the Radicals' letters showed their views and program were diverse and complex, and the Republican Party was far from unified. He concluded that an examination of the often-overlooked letters,

> along with other contemporary sources, reveals a much more complex social, economic, and political evolution [in Reconstruction politics] than is found in partisan accounts by historians who neglect material prejudicial to their sectional sympathies.[11]

The next crack to appear in the pro-Johnson and anti-Radical argument came from Ralph Roske. His article, "The Seven Martyrs?" directly took issue with Kennedy's Profiles in Courage and thereby confronted the earlier view. That view held that the vindictive Radicals spent twenty or more years after the failed Johnson impeachment trial hounding the seven Johnson acquitters to their political deaths. While Roske did not comment on President Johnson's performance, he did dispel the myth of the seven acquitters' "unrelieved martyrdom." He asked if a look at the lives of the seven indicated "if [they] had recanted . . . could they have been politically 'saved'?" his answer was that "It does not." Several of the seven regained some political stature, some within the Republican Party. Clearly, the Radicals were not vindictive on this count.[12]

Fawn Brodie's Thaddeus Stevens: Scourge of the South appeared in

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[10]Jack B. Scroggs, "Southern Reconstruction: A Radical View," Journal of Southern History 24 (November 1958): 409.

[11]Ibid., p. 429

[12]Ralph Roske, "The Seven Martyrs?" American Historical Review 64 (January 1959): 323-24, 330.

1959. It was the first of several biographies that would reexamine the Radicals. Brodie's book was significant because of its content and because of its method. In content it was sympathetic, certainly a contrast to the very critical and hostile view of Stevens that had prevailed since the Rhodes era. In method it was a scholarly, psychohistorical view, and was one of the first book-length historical works to use that approach. In both its sympathy for the Radicals and its method, the Brodie book served as a precursor of McKitrick's work.

There was hardly a section in Brodie's book that did not dispel one of the previously prevailing views of Andrew Johnson, the Radicals, and Reconstruction in general. While Brodie admitted that Stevens was zealous, hardened, tyrannical, and rude, she concluded it was all for a just cause and sincere belief, and not due to personal bitterness:

> No one can deny that Thaddeus Stevens was fanatical in the pursuit of principle, but he was fanatical for free schools and universal suffrage at a time when opposition fanatics stood for caste and ignorance. If he was callous toward the Southern white, he was also a great humanitarian for the Negro people. If he made solid contributions to the rapacious railroad and tariff interests, he also contributed enormously to the spread of democracy by extending the suffrage to millions of blacks and poor whites.[13]

In addition, she disputed the notion that Stevens's (and the Radicals') interests consistently corresponded with those of the eastern capitalists. She made the case for the similarity of Lincoln's and the Radicals' (not Johnson's) program. She dispelled the argument of Stevens's vindictive motives by claiming that it was not until the Schurz visit to the South, Freedman's Bureau reports of violence, the enactment of black codes, black lynchings, and the South's refusal to ratify the

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[13]Fawn M. Brodie, Thaddeus Stevens: Scourge of the South (New York: Norton, 1959), p. 370.

Fourteenth Amendment that the Republicans realized that a tough Reconstruction program was necessary.[14]

While there were several reasons for the divisiveness of the Reconstruction era, including Stevens's obstinacy, the "political ineptness of Andrew Johnson" was chief among them. Brodie characterized both Stevens and the president as "obstinate, graceless, and belligerent," but she concluded that "had the President been a little less inept," impeachment and some of the other political battles need never have occurred.[15] Impeachment was due not simply to Johnson's ineptness; Brodie said he clearly erred in principle as well as behavior:

> Beneath the clamor, slander, and vituperation of the impeachment process there was a grave political problem. This was the question of whether a president should be removed because he chose to thwart the will of the majority party. Johnson had vetoed over twenty bills in three years; Andy Jackson, who until now had held the record for vetoes, had vetoed but eleven in eight years. Moreover, Johnson's were not petty vetoes but attempts to block congressional solutions for the greatest crisis of the time. And when the veto device failed, he often turned, by administrative techniques that could not be called illegal, to thwart acts that had been approved.[16]

While Brodie admitted that the "fair means and foul" used to impeach the president damaged Stevens's and the Republican party's reputation, the onus of responsibility fell on Johnson.[17]

The Scroggs article claimed the Radicals were not a monolithic

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[14]Ibid., pp. 170, 230, 201.

[15]Ibid., pp. 254, 283, 324-25.

[16]Ibid., p. 337

[17]Ibid., pp. 263, 324-25, 228. Brodie also castigated Johnson's racial intolerance. In addition, she admitted Stevens had shown vindictiveness toward Johnson, but claimed Johnson had invited these feelings by opening an old wound, Stevens's peripheral involvement in a Gettysburg murder many years before.

force when Johnson became president. The Roske article demythologized the "martyrdom" of Johnson's impeachment acquitters. Brodie in large measure praised Stevens and some of the other Radicals and condemned Johnson for the problems of Reconstruction. Two additional works published in 1959 also challenged a previously prevailing view of Reconstruction. These directly took issue with Howard Beale's economic interpretation.

Columbia University scholar Stanley Coben's article, "Northeastern Business and Radical Reconstruction: A Re-examination," appeared in the June 1959 issue of the Mississippi Valley Historical Review. Closely scrutinizing congressional roll call votes and Board of Trade reports from various cities, he showed that the Radicals had not been united on post-war economic policy. He also showed that business leaders were not in agreement on the tariff and other economic issues. If factions within the Radical and the business communities supported different policies, the two groups could hardly have formed the solid front that Beale had portrayed:

> A closer examination of the important economic legislation and congressional battles of the period, and of the attitudes of businessmen and influential business groups, reveals serious divisions on economic issues among Radical legislators and northeastern businessmen alike. Certainly neither business leaders nor Radicals were united in support of any specific set of economic aims. Considerable evidence also suggests that the divisions among businessmen often cut across sectional as well as industrial lines. Furthermore, evidence indicates that few northeastern business groups were interested in southern investments in the early postwar years, and that these few were hostile to Radical Reconstruction.[18]

In addition, Coben dispelled the impression, based on Beale's

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[18]Stanley Coben, "Northeastern Business and Radical Reconstruction: A Re-examination," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 46 (June 1959):69.

view, that since businessmen supported the Radicals, they must have opposed Andrew Johnson. He showed that many business leaders, especially in New York, had publicly supported the president during his "swing around the circle" campaign. In fact, a grand dinner in Johnson's honor had been held at Delmonico's during the New York stop. Coben showed that similar support came from the business press. Coben concluded by suggesting that "factors other than the economic interests of the Northeast must be used to explain the motivation and aims of Radical Reconstruction."[19] He didn't say what those factors were, but McKitrick would soon supply the answer.

Robert Sharkey's Money, Class, and Party also appeared in 1959. It presented at length arguments similar to those developed in Coben's article. Sharkey closely examined congressional votes on financial issues. He also read the diaries and examined the manuscript collections of those who served in Congress at that time. Sharkey looked at the Radicals' policies and found they were divided in three factions, each with differing views on financial policy. The business community, as Coben had shown, also was not in agreement. Sharkey identified four different business groups. He concluded that Beard and Beale failed "to distinguish between the divergent interests of industrial and financial capitalists." These differences disproved Beale's claim that the Radicals had "conspired to keep the South out of the Union" so that they would not ally with western interests on economic matters. Such a goal

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[19]Ibid., pp. 87-89, 90. Coben's and Sharkey's work actually proved Beale right, in a way. Beale had claimed the Radicals had pushed economic interests to the background during the 1866 congressional campaign. They certainly had good reason to do so: they had no unified program.

was impossible because "there was absolutely no unity on this point among Republicans themselves."[20]

Sharkey did not claim that economic forces were not important when looking at Reconstruction. Instead, he suggested that Beard in general and Beale in particular had not gone far enough in their analysis. They should have focused on "the conflicting interests of the various economic groups." Their interpretation prevailed, Sharkey said, because "where historians have begun their work with a preconceived theory of the economic basis of the Civil War and Reconstruction, there has been a tendency for troublesome inconsistencies to be ignored."[21]

What of Andrew Johnson? Like Coben, Sharkey did not comment directly on the president's strengths or weaknesses. He pointed out, though, that Johnson's positions on economic issues were in fact similar to those of Wade, Stevens, and Butler. If the Radicals were not united on economic issues, and if Andrew Johnson and some of the Radicals shared similar views on economic policy, then by implication there must have been non-economic reasons for Johnson's clash with the Radicals.[22]

The stage was thus set for McKitrick's work. While Brodie, Donald, Scroggs, Roske, Coben, and Sharkey had each dispelled or

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[20]Robert P. Sharkey, Money, Class and Party: An Economic Study of the Civil War and Reconstruction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), pp. 279, 293, 299-302, 304.

[21]Ibid., pp. 300, 276-77.

[22]Ibid., p. 308. For later views upholding Coben and Sharkey, see Irwin F. Unger, The Greenback Era: A Social and Political History of American Finance, 1865-1879 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), and Peter Kolchin, "The Business Press and Reconstruction, 1864-1868, "Journal of Southern History 33 (May 1967): 183-196. Coben, Kolchin, and Unger were all David Donald's students.

disproven some of the pro-Johnson, anti-Radical Reconstruction views, a synthesis was needed to attack directly the pro-Johnson view. Eric McKitrick's book was that work.

Other scholars had suggested there were "other" reasons for Reconstruction's failures. McKitrick supplied the reason in his 1960 book, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction. McKitrick's answer was direct, plain, and simple: Andrew Johnson was the reason. McKitrick said that through a complete inability to provide political leadership, Johnson caused almost all the problems of the Reconstruction era. Furthermore, he invited his own impeachment, not by committing an impeachable offense, but by so irritating the Republicans with his obstinacy that they chose impeachment as a method to silence him.

McKitrick's reasoning was psycho-historical. He said that Andrew Johnson spent his entire life as an "outsider." First he was a poor, social outsider in a world ruled by southern aristocrats; then he was a regional political outsider, an anti-secessionist in the Civil War South; and finally he was a national political outsider, a Democrat and a Southerner in a post-Civil War Washington ruled by Republican Northerners. Combative and defensive, his "personal fulfillment had long since come to be defined as the fruit of struggle . . . against forces specifically organized for thwarting him."[23] This was Johnson's style, and this was how he behaved in the White House. McKitrick claimed:

> The only setting in which Andrew Johnson's powers could become fully engaged was one in which the man would be battling against great odds. The only role whose attributes he fully understood was that of the maverick, operating out on the fringe of things. For the full

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[23]Eric L. McKitrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 86.

> nourishment and maximum functioning of his mind, matters had to be so arranged that all the original forces of society could in some sense real or symbolic, be leagued against him. In such array they could be overborne by the unorganized forces of whom he always imagined himself the instrument--an assault whose only rhythm was measured out, as it were, by the great heartbeat of the people. These were the terms in which the battle of life had its fullest meaning for Andrew Johnson.[24]

Clearly, the man was not able to compromise.

McKitrick looked at the period between May 29, 1865, and March 2, 1867, the dates marking the beginning of presidential and congressional Reconstruction, respectively. During this period, McKitrick claimed, Johnson had ample opportunity--and the necessary support--to lead Congress in formulating a final plan to restore the South.[25] But the task proved too great for the "outsider." McKitrick said Johnson

> threw away his own power, both as president and as party leader, . . . assisted materially, in spite of himself, in blocking the reconciliation of North and South, and his behavior . . . [disrupted] the political life of an entire nation.[26]

McKitrick attacked the Milton/Stryker/Winston "revisionists" directly. He claimed that these authors had been so intent upon the personal ramifications of Johnson's negative image that the setting for this drama had been ignored. They had glossed over Congress and Republican politics. To disprove the personal dishonor heaped on Johnson's reputation by Rhodes and other critics, the revisionists had ignored or distorted the era's politics. Congress and the Republicans deserved a closer examination. Johnson could still be admirable

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[24]Ibid., p. 85.

[25]Ibid., p. 84.

[26]Ibid.

personally, even if he was politically inept.[27]

As David Donald had done in 1956, McKitrick claimed that the Radical Republicans in 1867 were not the same in policy, numbers, or group dynamics as they had been in 1865. There simply had not been a solid group attempting to block Lincoln, nor was there a solid group attempting to block Johnson when he took over. The Republicans eventually united on impeachment, but only after having been driven together by Johnson's obstinacy. The explanation for the bad political feelings and divisiveness of the era lay not with the Radicals, but with Johnson himself. Because he had "no real connections with the party" that had chosen him for the vice presidency, because "there was little in his past that had given him any preparation for the role of party leader," he failed miserably at finding a political solution to the problems of reconstructing the nation.[28] McKitrick's view upheld in part that of British historian James Russell, who in 1954 called Johnson "a man without a party."

Because Johnson had little experience in political party leadership he also tended to ignore political solutions to problems. He just did not think that way. According to McKitrick, one of Johnson's major failures was that he saw Reconstruction as a constitutional and not a political problem. Political problems are solved with political solutions, which include compromise. But constitutional problems are solved differently. And despite the flexibility "written into" the U.S. Constitution, some people tended to look at it inflexibly. Andrew

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[27]Ibid., pp. 5, 7.

[28]Ibid., pp. 89-90.

Johnson was one.

McKitrick speculated that Johnson probably had resolved for himself the problem of the relation of the seceded states to the Union "early in the war." Johnson decided then that the states had not left the Union, and therefore "the right of the state to regulate its own internal concerns had never ceased to exist." He would not compromise on this; nor would he compromise on black suffrage, which he opposed. McKitrick said the Republicans, not united on these issues, could have been led on a moderate course, if Johnson had been willing to trade some of his plan for some of theirs. But he would not play the game of politics. He alienated the moderate Republicans and by his own opposition caused them to solidify against him. With enough votes to override his vetoes, the Republican Congress had its way with Reconstruction.[29]

On what did McKitrick base his view? His footnotes and bibliography show he was very familiar with all the major works covered so far in this study. He relied more heavily on manuscripts and newspapers than on other sources. It's interesting to note, however, that he singled out James G. Blaine and James Ford Rhodes as scholars with whose work he "discovered an unusual rapport." McKitrick said the Welles diary, which had been praised (and heavily relied upon) by Johnson defenders, was "overrated" as a source. He contended that Welles had "one of the narrowest and most rigid minds of the entire period," and that he was "almost totally lacking" in "political capacity."[30]

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[29]Ibid., pp. 92, 489-490.

[30]Ibid., pp. 517, 521.

McKitrick's book had an immediate impact on the historical profession. Bernard Weisberger, in a review in the American Historical Review, hailed it as an "unusual, creative, provocative, and provoking study" and that it made "a fine, solid contribution to Reconstruction historiography." Furthermore, he said it raised "hard, insistent questions about the [past] drift of historical study." In the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, T. Harry Williams said McKitrick's "analysis of the President is devastating" and that Johnson was "apparently about to enter another cycle of interpretation in which he will appear as an incompetent." Not all the reviews were positive, but even a negative reviewer, William Hesseltine, wrote that "the character and conduct of Andrew Johnson pictured in [McKitrick's] book may well serve as a 'control' in future studies."[31]

Between the publication of McKitrick's book in 1960 and Michael Les Benedict's 1973 book on Johnson's impeachment, the scholarship relevant to Andrew Johnson's reputation took several paths. Johnson himself was not the main focus. Instead, the focus was on Reconstruction politics and the Radicals themselves. Political scientists, once again, would have their say on Johnson. But except for a few popularized, unscholarly accounts, Johnson would not be the focus of a major monograph between 1960 and 1973.[32]

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[31]Bernard Weisberger, review of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction by Eric McKitrick, in American Historical Review 66 (April 1961): 758-60; T. Harry Williams, McKitrick review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review 47 (December 1960): 518-19; and William B. Hesseltine, McKitrick review, Journal of Southern History 27 (February 1961):110-11.

[32]Lately Thomas, The First President Johnson: The Three Lives of the Seventeenth President of the United States of America (New York: William Morrow, 1968); Fay Warrington Brabson, Andrew Johnson: A Life in

These works on the Radicals and Reconstruction each dispelled one or more of the conclusions drawn by scholars of the pro-Johnson era. Most also touched upon or even disproved the overall view of Reconstruction as pictured by many historians discussed here, beginning with the Rhodes era. However, this discussion will be confined to the impact of these works on Andrew Johnson's reputation. An analysis of the evolution of Reconstruction historiography since 1960 is best left to a more appropriate vehicle than this.[33]

Let's look first at what several well-known historians had to say about the Radicals and other Republicans. The Brodie book had been one of the first to offer a more sympathetic look at a Radical figure. After McKitrick's book, studies on several other Radicals followed.

Harold Hyman made two contributions in this area. One was a biography of Stanton, begun by Benjamin P. Thomas but finished by Hyman after Thomas's death. It appeared in 1962. Hyman's other contribution, which contained arguments similar to those in the Stanton biography, was a 1960 journal article on Johnson, Stanton, and Grant. The article examined the Army's role in the events leading to impeachment. Hyman

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Pursuit of the Right Course (Durham, NC: Seeman Printery, 1972); Alan L. Paley, Andrew Johnson: The President Impeached (Charlotteville, NY: Sam Har Press, 1972); and Howard P. Nash, Jr., Andrew Johnson: Congress and Reconstruction (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinsen Press, 1972). For a brief evaluation of the first three, see McKitrick, Profile, p. 221. For the fourth book, see LaWanda Cox, review of Andrew Johnson: Congress and Reconstruction by Howard Nash, Journal of Southern History 39 (August 1973):474-75.

[33]For an idea of the complicated issues involved in recent Civil War and Reconstruction historiography, see Larry Kincaid, "Victims of Circumstance," pp. 48-66; and Richard O. Curry, "The Civil War and Reconstruction, 1864-1877: A Critical Overview of Recent Trends and Interpretations" Civil War History 20 (September 1974):215-38.

concluded that while Johnson's Reconstruction policy resembled Lincoln's in some respects, the president did not give the Army the support and protection it needed to carry out its Reconstruction duties in the South. As a result, Grant and Stanton turned increasingly to Congress for support. Like McKitrick had done, Hyman criticized Johnson for being inflexible and impolitic:

> Johnson proved rigid and doctrinaire in his convictions concerning federal-state relations and the power and influence he had at hand to wield. He deceived himself into thinking that he was emulating Lincoln not only in the form of Reconstruction policy but also in the exercise of executive leadership. He failed to see that Lincoln had never sought perfection, but only realizable goals, had never been willing to battle Congress but instead compromised with or circumvented its leaders, and had never dared lose the support of the Union soldiers.[34]

The biography was lengthy (over 600 pages) and, like Brodie's and McKitrick's book, was psycho-historical in its approach, though not to the degree the other works were. The authors emphasized the personal tragedies in Edwin Stanton's life (his asthma, the premature deaths of his wife, daughter, and brother), and described the secretary of war with words like "sober," "harsh," and "tough." He administered his office with sometimes "unpardonable severity." The authors claimed that Stanton and Lincoln came to have a close relationship, and that this had "aroused the jealously of Welles, Blair, and Chase."[35] The overall tone was very

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[34]Harold M. Hyman, "Johnson, Stanton, and Grant: A Reconsideration of the Army's Role in the Events Leading to Impeachment," American Historical Review 66 (October 1960):90-91.

[35]Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962) pp. 7, 41, 377-78, 385. The closeness between Lincoln and Stanton may have aroused such jealousy in Welles that it clouded his writing. In Hyman's article he claimed the Welles diary is "indispensible" but "one-sided." He said Milton-era studies of Reconstruction suffered by too heavy a reliance on it. See Hyman, "Johnson, Stanton, and Grant," p. 100.

positive. Since Stanton generally was second only to Thaddeus Stevens as a chief villain in the pro-Johnson Reconstruction view, this picture of Stanton had a big impact on historiography.[36]

Like McKitrick, Thomas and Hyman claimed Andrew Johnson was an inflexible constitutionalist who refused to compromise and "play politics" with the Republicans. The book claimed that while Stanton was disgusted by Johnson's "swing around the circle," at the end of 1866 he still felt Congress and the president could cooperate. Genuinely alarmed by the South's intransigence on Negro rights, Stanton felt that if Johnson had been willing to support the Fourteenth Amendment, the Republicans would have "left things alone." But this the president would not do. Furthermore, Johnson, whose obstinate behavior assured the ascendancy of the Republicans, continued to pit himself "against Congress and the Army," despite the fact that these institutions "enjoyed the strongest possible evidence of popular support."[37]

Hyman and Thomas described Johnson in words similar to those of Rhodes and other earlier critics:

> Johnson, after forming an opinion, proved obstinately averse to modifying it; nor would he, when unable to have his way in full, concede whatever might be necessary at the moment in order to obtain as much as he could. His strength was not pliant like Lincoln's, and he was often blindly stubborn, mistaking rigidity for constructive consistency . . . . It was not only that Johnson lacked Lincoln's temperament and sensitive tact. He lacked his predecessor's statesmanship and stature.[38]

Criticizing Johnson's obstinacy, comparing him unfavorably to Lincoln,

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[36]Castel, "Andrew Johnson," p. 181.

[37]Hyman and Thomas, Stanton, pp. 440, 505-06, 456, 513, 577.

[38]Ibid., p. 440.

and implying Lincoln would have achieved what Johnson could not, had all been done by the early twenty century scholars. The Johnson image was being recast in a mold similar to that constructed by the Rhodes school.[39]

The next Radical to undergo a complete turnaround in image was Senator Benjamin Wade. The Ohio Republican would have succeeded Andrew Johnson as president if Johnson had been convicted at his impeachment trial. The pro-Johnson writers as well as some of the earlier writers had pictured Wade as a scheming, power hungry villain. Hans Trefousse's 1963 book directly challenged that view.

Like Brodie, McKitrick, and Hyman, Trefousse's method was psycho-historical. Trefousse pictured Wade's adult behavior as "overcompensating" for the difficulties of his childhood of poverty. He had been very shy, and in early adulthood had been overshadowed by a successful younger brother. As a result, he took on an "outward aggressiveness" and came to believe an "uncompromising approach" was the best course to follow. Because he had been poor, he "hated exploitation . . . and all his life he affirmed his belief that he aim of government was the protection of the weak from the strong." His dedication to black rights was deep-seated and sincere, and it formed the basis of his feelings about the course Reconstruction should take.[40]

Like McKitrick and others, Trefousse castigated Johnson for his obstinacy and his lack of political skill. He claimed "the trouble with

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[39]Castel, "Andrew Johnson," p. 181.

[40]H.L. Trefousse, Benjamin Franklin Wade: Radical Republican from Ohio (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), pp. 26-27, 8, 219.

Johnson was that he had no real sympathy with the minimal aims of the Republican party." Those aims included ensuring black rights as well as protection for southern Republican Unionists and political security for the Republican party nationwide. Johnson's plan certainly would not have accomplished those goals, and, in fact, assured their defeat. Trefousse wondered "how [Johnson] expected his party to acquiesce in its own overthrow." Again echoing Rhodes and others, he claimed "Had the President possessed merely a fraction of Lincoln's political skill, he would have acted accordingly. But he was much too stubborn to make the necessary adjustments." The result--and here Trefousse echoed Donald--was the alienation of the moderate wing of the Republican Party.[41]

Part two of David Donald's biography of Charles Sumner appeared in 1970. In part one, Donald had laid the groundwork. He made the case that the often-imperious Massachusetts senator was a "'statesman doctrinaire,'" a man "inflexibly committed to a set of basic ideas and moral principles." Those principles were human rights and black equality. While Sumner had a difficult personality and was in some ways hard to defend, the overall view was that his shortcomings were overshadowed by his commitment to human equality.[42]

Part two continued this theme, and depicted Sumner from the Civil War through the end of his career. Donald was less psychological in approach than Brodie and McKitrick had been. But his book was similar to Brodie's in that he described a person of doctrinaire beliefs who had

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[41]Ibid., pp. 261-62, 260.

[42]The words in inside quotation marks are those of Charles Francis Adams. David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. viii.

many faults but a strength that overshadowed them. Donald's book did three things with regard to Andrew Johnson's reputation. First, by pointing out the strong differences between Sumner and other Radicals, especially Fessenden, he underscored the idea that Radical cohesiveness was a myth. Second, he showed how Johnson was pulled in three political directions, by the extreme Radicals, by the moderates, and by the Democrats. Donald made a point that he had made in 1956, that by not joining with the moderates, Johnson had missed a golden opportunity to take a firm political stand in a direction that might have garnered wide support. Third, by depicting Sumner as a skillful politician who maintained his doctrinaire stance but still was responsive to his home constituency, he dispelled the pro-Johnson view that Sumner was simply an arrogant, vindictive extremist who acted without regard to public opinion.[43]

Several other works concerning the Radicals, other Republicans, and their sympathizers also appeared in the 1960s. Some addressed the issue of Johnson's competence; some hardly mentioned him. But the positive light each cast on its Radical or Republican subject had the effect of underscoring the work of Brodie, Thomas, Hyman, Trefousse, and Donald. Most of these writers concluded that the Radicals were not villains but fair-minded men who wished to cooperate with the president as long as certain basic Reconstruction policies were adopted, and even on these they were flexible. If the Radicals were not the villains, then one must look to other causes for the source of Reconstruction ills. In

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[43]David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 247-48, 225, ix.

effect, these biographies and articles asked the question McKitrick had already answered.[44]

The 1960s saw a major scholarly rediscovery of the Reconstruction era. Literally dozens of monographs and scores of journal articles appeared. Some scholars, like Coben, Sharkey, and others, sought to take a deeper look at the Progressive view taken by Beard and Beale. Some, like Donald, examined the political scene more closely. Others were interested in the role blacks played in Reconstruction and the role racial issues played. Together, these sources overwhelmingly seconded McKitrick's revised view of Andrew Johnson. Johnson did not exactly become a villain, nor would he be viewed with the personal derision and scorn of Rhodes and his contemporaries. But, as the era of the 1960s and early 1970s ended, any serious scholar would have been hard pressed to exonerate Andrew Johnson. A quick chronological look at some of the highlights of Reconstruction historiography shows the extent to which Johnson's image had tarnished, perhaps irreparably.

John Hope Franklin's Reconstruction: After the Civil War appeared in 1961. One of the first of the new Reconstruction revisions, it reduced the exaggerations of the Beale and pro-Johnson accounts to a

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[44]Charles A. Jellison, Fessenden of Maine: Civil War Senator (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962); M. Kathleen Perdue, "Salmon P. Chase and the Impeachment Trial of Andrew Johnson," Historian 27 (January 1964):75-92; Richard S. West, Jr., Lincoln's Scapegoat General: A Life of Benjamin F. Butler, 1819-1893 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Patrick W. Riddleberger, George Washington Julian, Radical Republican: A Study in Nineteenth Century Politics and Reform (Indianapolis: Indian Historical Bureau 1966); William S. McFeely, Yankee Stepfather: General O.O. Howard and the Freedmen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); and Robert D. Bridges, "Johnson Sherman and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson," Ohio History 314 (December 1973):176-91.

more reasonable picture. Franklin dispelled the view that the South was inundated by corrupt, money-grubbing carpetbaggers, said there was no widespread usurpation of power by ignorant blacks, and reminded readers that there was a sizable proportion of Unionists in the South. Franklin also made the case that the black codes passed in the South under Johnson Reconstruction posed a very real threat to the North and drove the Republicans to implement a stronger Reconstruction plan.[45]

As for Johnson, Franklin said that the president was "greatly embarrassed by the lack of prudence and modesty in the late enemies of the United States" when they enacted black codes and otherwise behaved intransigently. Nevertheless, under his plan the South continued with its course of reelecting ex-Confederates. While Johnson was embarrassed, he did nothing to change things, and thereby encouraged the Southerners: "The optimism inspired by the Johnson policies swept many Southerners into a feeling of confidence bordering on arrogance that they could not or would not suppress." Franklin claimed Johnson's powerlessness to stem the southern tide was compounded by his personal failings, which were "hypersensitivity," "obstinacy," and a complete lack of Lincoln's greatest qualities, "flexibility, adjustment, compassion."[46]

The next chapter of Reconstruction scholarship was contributed by LaWanda Cox and John Cox. While underscoring Donald's view that Johnson lacked political acumen, they also criticized Johnson's racial policies more fully than had been done before. They tied his racial prejudice to

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[45]John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 49, 50, 53.

[46]Ibid., pp. 44, 51, 27.

his refusal to compromise with the Republicans on black suffrage and other racial issues, saying his "lack of sensitivity to Republican racial attitudes" caused him to miss the chance to attract moderate Republican support. Even more damaging, Johnson deprived the nation of "an opportunity to establish a firm foundation for equal citizenship with moderation and a minimum of rancor." The volatile civil rights issue would thus "pass unresolved to twentieth-century America." Had Johnson been more sensitive to racial issues and to the sincere humanitarian concerns of the Republicans, he "might have spared . . . the country a tragic experience."[47]

The Coxes brought Reconstruction historiography, and attitudes toward Andrew Johnson full circle from the Rhodes view. Rhodes and his contemporaries praised Johnson's racial views, but blamed his political ineptitude for bringing about Radical Reconstruction attempts to grant black equality. This was a misguided program, given black inferiority. Thus, they blamed Johnson for the years of racial and political strife that followed. The Coxes criticized Johnson's ineptness, saying he interfered with congressional attempts to grant black equality, and condemned him for bringing about years of racial inequality and strife. A later historian pointed out that this was "an interesting example of scholars widely separated in time and ideology arriving at basically the

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[47]John H. Cox and LaWanda Cox, "Lincoln and His Ghost Writers: An Analysis of the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights Veto Messages," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 48 (December 1961): 460, 479. See also their book, Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1866: Dilemmas of Reconstruction America (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963). For a view of the effect racial prejudice had on historical scholarship in general see Alan D. Harper, "William A. Dunning: The Historian as Nemesis," Civil War History 10 (March 1964): 54-66.

same conclusion about a historical figure for diametrically opposed reasons."[48]

W.R. Brock's An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction appeared in 1963. An Englishman, Brock brought a different perspective to the study of American history. His book dispelled many of the pro-Johnson assumptions about Reconstruction, but at its heart was a unique view, that "for the majority in the victorious North [the Civil War] had become a war to create a more perfect Union." That Union was to include black equality, but also a government of "legislative supremacy." The latter was rejected with the failure of impeachment.[49]

As for Johnson himself, Brock seemed to be in agreement with McKitrick's and Donald's views. He praised Johnson's administrative skills and his loyalty, and said that "in happier times he would have made a successful President." But, Brock claimed, he had limitations that proved disastrous. These included "initial indecision," followed by "great obstinacy," a "defensive arrogance" and a tendency to "treat all criticism as betrayal." Echoing McKitrick's "outsider" theme, Brock emphasized Johnson's loneliness, isolation, and his "withdrawal from the real world of politics." Brock blamed the failure of Johnson's Reconstruction policy on "Johnson's apparent tolerance" of the South's insistence upon enacting black codes and its choice of ex-Confederates as leaders, and "his failure to indicate that the South was not going to

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[48]Castel, "Andrew Johnson," p. 184.

[49]W.R. Brock, An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 2, 4, 259, 262. Brock dispelled the myth of Radical hegemony in general (p. 43), and refuted the Beale thesis that the Republicans agreed on economic programs (pp. 8-9).

have everything its own way."[50] For the ills and tragedies of the Reconstruction era in general, Brock, like Donald, blamed Johnson's political ineptitude:

> Equal rights in the Constitution and perpetual union proved to be the two hinges upon which congressional policy turned, and the doom of Johnson's policy lay in the discovery that the party could be united upon the need for certain "guarantees" which he had failed to provide.[51]

Brock more or less summed up his feelings by quoting Sumner's letter to Wade concerning Johnson: "'He missed a golden opportunity.'"[52]

David Donald's 1965 book, The Politics of Reconstruction more fully developed the political argument made in his 1956 American Heritage article. Based on a series of lectures delivered at Louisiana State University, the book claimed again that moderate Republicans were the key to implementing a presidential Reconstruction policy, and that Andrew Johnson missed his chance to gain their support. He strongly dispelled the pro-Johnson, anti-Radical view that had prevailed before, by attacking the assumption that the Republicans were at all cohesive. He said that most historians before the 1960s had misread the "extent of the differences" between the moderate and Radical wings of the Republican party. Even when Johnson, through ineptness, threw away his chance to forge a coalition, congressional Republicans did not unite; Donald said that "the history of Reconstruction legislation [became] the story of the

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[50]Ibid., pp. 31-32, 44.

[51]Ibid., p. 46.

[52]Ibid., p. 42.

tug of war between these two groups; moderates and Radicals."[53]

Donald claimed there was little Republican agreement on Reconstruction policy before January 1867. At that time, however, congressional Republicans were alarmed by two developments: the growing number of southern states that refused to endorse the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Supreme Court's Milligan decision, which implied martial law might no longer apply in the South. Congress would have to act quickly to enact Reconstruction legislation before its term expired on March 4. Because neither the Radicals nor the Republicans in general were a cohesive group, "any new Reconstruction legislation passed . . . was going to have to be a compromise." The result, according to Donald, was four political "cycles" in which the legislative pendulum swung from one extreme to another. All groups had their say, but the moderate Republicans held the balance of power. The result was the Reconstruction Act of 1867. Far from the extremist legislation hammered through a docile Congress by the unified, wild-eyed Radicals of Milton, Stryker, Winston (and Rhodes, too, for that matter), this "was not the work of any man or any faction." Donald concluded that "Democrats and Radical Republicans alike were responsible for its provisions, and Moderate Republicans and Conservatives also helped shape its outlines."[54]

Kenneth Stampp's The Era of Reconstruction also appeared in 1965. It varied in focus, but, like the McKitrick, Cox, and Brock books, held Andrew Johnson's refusal to cooperate with Congress responsible for the

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[53]David Donald, The Politics of Reconstruction (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 25, 52.

[54]Ibid., pp. 57, 62, 64, 81.

federal government's failure to work out an orderly program of Reconstruction. Like McKitrick, especially, Stampp stressed Johnson's shortcomings as a politician.[55]

Political ineptness was not Johnson's only failing. In a vein somewhat different from other scholars, Stampp claimed that Johnson practiced the "politics of nostalgia"; his policies were just plain wrong for the times. He wanted a Reconstruction policy that would elevate the white, but not the black, yeoman. But the yeoman, in an age of post-war industrialization, was becoming an anachronism. Furthermore, "In an age of consolidation," Stampp claimed, "Johnson, in spite of his devotion to the Union, still believed in political decentralization and state rights." Unfortunately for Johnson, the Republicans had a different view. As they gradually realized what Johnson's goals actually were, they "reluctantly decided" that they would have to oppose executive leadership. Thus, far from united and not vindictive in motivation, the Republicans passed their own Reconstruction legislation.[56]

Rembert Patrick's The Reconstruction of the Nation was published in 1967. Patrick built upon McKitrick's and Donald's view of Johnson's political ineptness, and, as nearly all these more recent scholars had done, injected his own particular emphasis. He built the case that the treatment of blacks under Johnson Reconstruction--the black codes and so on--were a key in mustering Republican support for a harsher plan than

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[55]Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877 (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 60.

[56]Ibid., pp. 55, 54, 53, 56. Winston had praised Johnson for practicing, in Stampp's words the "politics of nostalgia." See Winston, Andrew Johnson, p. 328.

Johnson had implemented. While at the end of 1865 the South was on its way "to tranquility and economic recovery" under presidential Reconstruction, the enactment of the black codes in 1866 showed a change of heart. These codes were "harsh, discriminatory, and indiscreet." They alienated Northerners and served as the impetus behind congressional Reconstruction. They "became a powerful weapon in the arsenal of congressmen desiring to discredit Presidential Reconstruction and were powerful support for congressional policies."[57]

Unlike Schouler and some of the earlier scholars, Patrick did not say the black codes were proof that factors beyond Johnson's control were responsible for the ill-feelings generated by Reconstruction. Instead, he held Johnson responsible for misleading Southerners into believing that they could pursue a state-centered course of Reconstruction. He concluded that "Southerners erred in blindly following Johnson's lead" and that their failure to appease the North "made a disastrous impression."[58]

As for the president himself, Patrick upheld McKitrick's and Donald's view. While he said Johnson was "endowed with abundant native intelligence," he "was not a party man." Echoing McKitrick's "outsider" approach, Patrick called Johnson "the lone wolf, maverick . . . ." Patrick joined most of the McKitrick era scholars in saying the Republicans "had not been united" on Reconstruction. He said both Johnson and the Radicals had a chance to claim the support of the all-

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[57]Rembert Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation (New York: Oxford, 1967), pp. 40, 44, 49.

[58]Ibid., pp. 61, 28.

important moderate Republicans, but because the president "would not yield or compromise one principle," moderate support swung to the Radicals in their effort to construct a plan supported by a cross-section of Congress.[59]

Stanley Kutler was the next scholar to look at Reconstruction. His approach was unique in that he looked at judicial and constitutional issues. He specifically attacked the view of Winston and others that the congressional action in July 1866 that reduced the size of the Supreme Court from ten to seven members was yet another "general and sordid example of the Radical Republicans' accumulated misdeeds," and their hostility to President Johnson. (With fewer Supreme Court members, Johnson would have less chance of appointing one.) He concluded that the evidence indicated "little reason to cast this issue into a simple 'pro' and 'anti' Johnson dichotomy."[60] This issue did not comprise a major part of the pro-Johnson evidence, but it had been mentioned. Now it, too, was dispelled.

Hans Trefousse, in a 1968 journal article, cast a slightly different light on Reconstruction. He did not, however, change the now critical view of Andrew Johnson. He suggested that Johnson's impeachment served a somewhat different role than other historians had suggested.

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[59]Ibid., pp. 28, 55, 54, 49. Of course, one might claim Johnson was, indeed, a "party man"--that he was looking out for the interests of the Democrats. Hans Trefousse, Martin Mantell, and Michael Les Benedict would suggest this later.

[60]Winston, Andrew Johnson p. 384. Stanley I. Kutler, "Reconstruction and the Supreme Court: The Numbers Game Reconsidered," Journal of Southern History 32 (February 1966): 42, 58, 45. Also, see Kutler's book-length articulation of his ideas: Judicial Power and Reconstruction Politics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).

McKitrick had asserted that impeachment was unnecessary, since Johnson was politically impotent by 1868. In fact, he said impeachment was risky, since it invited public disapproval of the Republicans. Removal of the president (or its threat) would serve to silence Johnson, whose powerless but irritating defiance continued to annoy Congress.[61] Trefousse took a different approach. He claimed that the 1867 elections proved the Radicals' power was waning since public opinion did not support liberal policies regarding blacks. Impeachment and conviction might revive the Radicals' strength. Instead, the failure to convict hastened the group's demise. This added a new dimension to the Reconstruction discussion. Trefousse did, however, continue to subscribe to the general view that Johnson's "consistent hostility" and his resistance to "remaking" the former Confederate states politically threatened the Republicans and invited their opposition.[62]

Martin Mantell's 1973 book, Johnson, Grant, and the Politics of Reconstruction took up the theme of Trefousse's article. He also built upon the earlier work of Benjamin Thomas and Harold Hyman. A doctoral student of McKitrick's, Mantell looked at the latter half of Johnson's term and especially the elections of 1867. Mantell maintained that

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[61]For McKitrick's view on impeachment, see Andrew Johnson, pp. 488-90. For similar, though not identical, views see Brodie, Thaddeus Stevens, pp. 324-25; Thomas and Hyman, Stanton, p. 612; Trefousse, Benjamin Franklin Wade, p. 293; Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, pp. 148-54. Brock said impeachment was significant for constitutional reasons, but argued that it was politically risky; Brock, An American Crisis, pp. 259, 262. Brodie also said it was risky; Brodie, Thaddeus Stevens, pp. 324-25. For a discussion of how historians have viewed impeachment, see Sefton, "The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson."

[62]Hans L. Trefousse, "The Acquittal of Andrew Johnson," pp. 149, 161, 152-53.

Congress had been supreme in overriding Johnson vetoes during 1866 and 1867, but depended upon the Army for "day to day implementation of the Reconstruction Acts." To ensure cooperation, they openly courted, and received, the support of General Grant. But the Democratic political resurgence in the 1867 elections led Johnson to believe he had public opinion on his side, and he sought to "hinder the completion of the congressional program." Impeachment became the only option, "an essentially political act in which the major concern of Republicans was the success of the Reconstruction program they had established."[63]

This view, like Trefousse's, differed from McKitrick's and some of the others' views on the impeachment question. The overall view of Johnson, however, was not different. Mantell depicted the president as "politically insensitive" and "totally unresponsive to Republic desires." Like McKitrick, he blamed Johnson's strict adherence to the Constitution and a conservative states-rights approach to Reconstruction for causing problems with Congress. Unlike McKitrick, Mantell suggested that Johnson did have political motives--building a broad political base of Southerners and Northern Democrats. But that strategy backfired as Johnson alienated public opinion. His obstinacy, particularly his vetoes of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the Civil Rights Bill, solidified the previously non-unified Republicans.[64]

Another 1973 book expanded earlier scholarship. Harold M. Hyman's A More Perfect Union looked at constitutional issues and followed

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[63]Martin E. Mantell, Johnson, Grant, and the Politics of Reconstruction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973) pp. 2, 3-4.

[64]Ibid., pp. 14-16.

up W.R. Brock's claim that "the war had . . . started to preserve the Union, but for the majority in the North it had become a war to perfect the Union." Hyman's book was long and his prose abstruse. But a recurring theme was that Johnson's Reconstruction policy encouraged the South's intransigence, which in turn brought about congressional action and resulting bitterness. Touching on the theme of LaWanda and John Cox, Hyman said Johnson's policy was not that of a conservative constitutionalist, but a deliberate strategy to use presidential power "to resurrect wholly white, overwhelming Democratic state governments and parties southward." Then Johnson switched tactics, claiming state autonomy and "denying that the nation had any rights to require decent standards in civil, political, and racial relationships."[65]

Yet another book on Reconstruction was published in 1973. This study, Michael Perman's Reunion Without Compromise, was somewhat novel in that it focused on former Confederate leaders and their response to Reconstruction. It did not directly address the issue of Andrew Johnson's performance, though it did reaffirm that Johnson gave conflicting signals in 1865 regarding what sort of policy he would undertake and what he expected from the South. In terms of the pro-and anti-Johnson debate, Perman's contribution was to offer fairly convincing proof that the intransigent South was not about to budge on equal rights or just about any other policy that meant a departure from antebellum attitudes. He suggested that not only was Johnson's lenient program ill-suited, but that the Radical program probably was not strong enough:

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[65]Brock, An American Crisis, p. 2; and Harold M. Hyman, A More Perfect Union: The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on the Constitution (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp. 291, 304.

"'Whipped' the Southern armies may have been, but 'whipped' the Southern mind and will were not."[66]

Perman, Hyman, Mantell, Trefousse, and Kutler, despite their somewhat different aims in looking at various aspects of Reconstruction, accepted the revised view of Andrew Johnson. In fact, there were many common threads among most of the works on the Civil War and Reconstruction published after McKitrick's book appeared. The Radical and Republican biographers agreed that the Radicals were sincere and not vindictive, and that Andrew Johnson was an inflexible leader whose policies threatened the very party that had elected him. The major works on Reconstruction, those of Franklin, the Coxes, Brock, Donald, Stampp, and Patrick, accepted the view that Johnson was politically inept, and that the Republicans were far from united and were actually quite moderate. Most also stressed that Johnson's policy was clearly misguided since the South showed every sign of refusing to do what Northerners expected as a minimum, which was to reject the political leadership of former Confederates and ensure a modicum of political and social rights for blacks. There were differences of emphasis, of course, but the cumulative effect of these works was to refute every major argument of the previous era of Johnson scholarship. After surveying the literature since 1960, Eric McKitrick wrote in 1969 that it would "never again be possible for a historian to make a really admirable chief executive out of Andrew Johnson."[67]

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[66]Michael Perman, Reunion Without Compromise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 53, 30, 9, 5-6, 2, 29.

[67]McKitrick, Profile, p. xxi.

We've seen what historians said about Andrew Johnson. What about scholars form different fields, or, at least, those looking from different angles? Since historians are often the first to assess history's important personalities, their interpretations usually carry over into other disciplines. This was the case with some of the political scientists who wrote about Andrew Johnson in the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s; the favorable view of the Milton-era scholars was reflected in their work. Once Andrew Johnson's reputation nosedived in the 1960s, the views of political observers seemed to follow suit.

In 1962, Arthur M. Schlesinger again polled a panel of historians and political scientists. In his 1948 survey, Johnson had ranked near the lower end of the "average" category, nineteenth of twenty-nine presidents overall. In 1962, he fell four places, to the bottom position in "average" group, or twenty-third of thirty-one. Grant was still ranked "failure," and Lincoln still ranked on top.[68] In light of McKitrick's appraisal, one might have expected Johnson's reputation to have fallen even further.

In 1966, political historian Thomas Bailey assessed the presidents, and mentioned the Schlesinger surveys. He attributed Johnson's drop in the ranking to the "corrections applied by Eric L. McKitrick in his study . . . to say nothing of the findings of other scholars." In addition, Bailey's other comments on Johnson showed the effect of the revisionist view. He claimed Johnson was "undeniably a man of intelligence, integrity, courage, and devotion to the Union and

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[68]Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Our Presidents: A Rating," New York Times Magazine 29 July 1962, pp. 12-13.

the Constitution." But his final judgment was negative; Johnson was impolitic, "at loggerheads" with the Republicans. Furthermore, he caused his own undoing by his "lack of self-control, ill temper, bad taste, and boorishness." Bailey sounded a bit like Rhodes and others of that era, in addition to sounding like McKitrick. He also resembled the Coxes in his conclusion, that Johnson's intransigence delayed "the closing of 'bloody chasm'" of the Civil War, and "visited untold woes on Southern whites and emancipated Negroes alike."[69] Bailey, a Stanford scholar of distinguished reputation, probably was no different from other scholars in accepting the revisionist view. One could surmise that other political writers followed suit.[70]

A 1970 Journal of American History article presented the results of another ranking. This survey was conducted by sociologist Gary Maranell. Those surveyed were all members of the Organization of American Historians. Implying that the Schlesinger poll used neither objective criteria nor scientific methods, Maranell's survey sought to use both. Those surveyed rated each president in six categories on an eleven-interval scale. Johnson ranked twentieth of thirty-three presidents in "general prestige," twenty-first in "strength of action," fourteenth in "presidential activeness," sixth in "idealism," thirty-second in

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[69]Thomas Andrew Bailey, Presidential Greatness: The Image and the Man from George Washington to the Present (New York: Appleton-Century, 1966), pp. 30, 294, 45.

[70]A thorough check of reference and other books written on the presidency after 1960 was not possible for this study. One reference book available at the University of Montana Library, written in 1966, definitely showed the influence of McKitrick and his contemporaries. See Margaret Bassett, Profiles and Portraits of American Presidents (Freeport, ME: B. Wheelwright Co., 1964), pp. 45-46.

"flexibility" (only Wilson ranked lower), and twenty-first in "accomplishments of his administration." While Johnson certainly didn't rank toward the top, except for his "flexibility" rating his evaluation was much less critical than one might have expected. Maranell offered no analysis.[71]

This era of the scholarly view of Andrew Johnson's reputation was rounded out by the works of one more scholar, historian Michael Les Benedict. His work reassessed Andrew Johnson's impeachment in light of recent views on Reconstruction. Stating that almost every aspect of Reconstruction except impeachment had been reappraised, Benedict sought to redress that omission. His own overall views on Reconstruction, Benedict admitted, "clearly fit within the mainstream of recent writings."[72]

Benedict's work resembled the arguments introduced in the 1968 Trefousse article and Mantell's 1973 book in that it showed there were legitimate reasons for impeachment. Unlike Trefousse and Mantell, Benedict made Johnson the main focus of his study. He took direct issue with the McKitrick view that impeachment was a "great act of ill-directed passion, and was supported by little else."[73] Instead, Benedict demonstrated that Johnson's interference in congressional Reconstruction

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[71]Gary M. Maranell, "The Evaluation of Presidents: An Extension of the Schlesinger Polls," Journal of American History 57 (June 1970):104-113.

[72]Michael Les Benedict, The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), p. 198. For a full discussion of his views on Reconstruction, see Benedict, A Compromise of Principle: Congressional Republicans and Reconstruction 1863-1869 (New York: Norton, 1974).

[73]McKitrick, Andrew Johnson, p. 506.

violated the principles of the separation of powers and that he did, indeed, threaten the success of the program by failing fully to carry out the Military Reconstruction Acts. Impeachment was not mindless, but necessary. In effect, Benedict argued that impeachment was legitimate even for what were, strictly speaking, non-indictable offenses. He concluded that Johnson was a "very modern president, holding a view of presidential authority that has only recently been established." Congressmen responded to what they saw as Johnson's overextension of presidential authority with impeachment, the only curb at their disposal. While the trial failed to successfully convict Johnson and proved politically damaging to the Republicans, as far as Johnson was concerned the effect was the same: Johnson "served out his term without renewing the intensive strife he had precipitated."[74]

Other historians agreed Benedict had rather convincingly revised the older view of impeachment.[75] The overall view of impeachment had been shared by the Milton-era scholars as well as McKitrick and others who had "debunked the idea that the President was an innocent victim unable any longer to disrupt the 'radical' program." Benedict thus dispelled one of the last remaining vestiges of the pro-Johnson view, the idea that impeachment was a needless and vindictive act. In other respects, however, Benedict's view very much followed the view of McKitrick and that of other 1960s-era scholars. He agreed that Johnson's

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[74]Benedict, Impeachment, pp. 180, 126, 139.

[75]Hans L. Trefousse, review of The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson, by Michael Les Benedict, in Civil War History 19 (December 1973):365-67; William McFeely, review of Benedict, Journal of American History 60 (March 1974):175; and Irving Dilliard, review of Benedict, American Historical Review 79 (June 1974):837-39.

strict constructionalism was his undoing. He claimed Johnson "interpreted every attack upon [his] position as an attack upon himself." He said that the president was stubborn, bitter, and defiant, and had "never acquired the breadth and suppleness of mind that formal training might have developed." Benedict also upheld the view that the Republicans were far from united in their policies, and even added a postscript, agreeing with Roske that Johnson's acquitters were not "driven out of the [Republican] party."[76]

Benedict then, upheld most of McKitrick's view. He expanded the newly accepted interpretation of Andrew Johnson to include a pro-Republican appraisal of impeachment. This removed yet another prop from the older view. Johnson's reputation continued to decline. As the era known as Watergate loomed on the American political scene, the image of the only president ever impeached had made a complete about-face since the 1930s. Like McKitrick, Benedict looked back over the writing of the most recent period of Johnson and Reconstruction scholarship and concluded "[Johnson's] reputation . . . may never recover from this historiographical barrage."[77]

The Watergate era and later years brought with them additional mention of Andrew Johnson. These assessments would not change the overall view of Andrew Johnson, but would switch the emphasis. From the

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[76]Benedict, Impeachment, pp. 4, 5, 3, 8, 182. For other works by Benedict, see "The Rout of Radicalism: Republicans and the Elections of 1867," Civil War History 18 (December 1972):334-44; "A New Look at the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson," Political Science Quarterly 88 (September 1973):349-67; and "Preserving the Constitution: The Conservative Basis of Radical Reconstruction," Journal of American History 61 (June 1974):65-90.

[77]Benedict, Impeachment, p. 203.

perspective of 1986 one wonders, like McKitrick and Benedict, whether Johnson's reputation will ever rebound. The scholarship of the 1960-1973 period seems to have had a perhaps irreversible effect.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Historians seek the truth. They aim to analyze and interpret the facts, going where those facts lead them. But history, in Charles Beard's words, is not "just a cat dragged by its tail to places it rarely wants to go." It cannot be divorced from the author's "frame of reference," the scholar's impression as conditioned by his or her own age and cultural setting. Andrew Johnson's historiographical rise and fall is a case in point.[1]

The story of Johnson's reputation traces the course of twentieth century American historiography. The American historical profession was in its infancy during the immediate post-Civil War period. Every event in American history was "fair game" for study. The Civil War, a bitter and divisive era, commanded much historical attention. As historical scholarship progressed, views changed. Andrew Johnson had been almost literally hounded from office. His reputation started at a low point, rose meteorically, then fell again.

In looking at their own profession, historians have offered explanations for changing views of historical events. History is a

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[1]Whitaker T. Deininger, "The Skepticism and Historical Faith of Charles A. Beard," Journal of the History of Ideas 25 (October 1954):574; and Charles A. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," American Historical Review 39 (January 1934):221.

process of synthesis, some say. A thesis is proposed, an antithesis arises in opposition or contrast, and sometimes a synthesis emerges. But surely more is involved. Here Beard's "frame of reference" become pertinent.

Because the Civil War and Reconstruction years were fraught with bitterness, Americans' feelings about the era have usually been strong and rarely ambivalent. Historians have been no exception. They sought to discover the facts but often used them to place blame, ease guilt, or justify a particular policy. More than forty years ago, W. E. B. DuBois identified the departure from the simple facts:

> What is the object of writing the history of Reconstruction? Is it to wipe out the disgrace of a people which fought to make slaves of Negroes? Is it to show that the North had higher motives than freeing black men? Is it to prove that Negroes were black angels? No. It is simply to establish Truth, on which Right in the future may be built.[2]

Andrew Johnson's reputation was a case in point. It followed the general course of Reconstruction historiography. As historians sought to discover the truth about the era, Johnson's image fell to whatever side was consistent with the overall view. Usually it was tied to the opposite side of a scholar's view of the Radical Republicans. As the Republicans' reputations fell, Johnson's rose, and vice versa. Those simple facts, DuBois's "Truth," proved at one time that Reconstruction filled the South with vindictive carpetbaggers and ill-mannered scalawags, and empowered ignorant blacks. Johnson, the opponent of the Reconstruction plan, was a hero. But the same "Truth" later showed that not all carpetbaggers were vindictive, not all scalawags were ill-

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[2]DuBois, Black Reconstruction, 725.

mannered and motivated by self-interest, and that few blacks had been empowered. For reasons tied to these conclusions, Johnson's image fell.

The explanation lies in Beard's "frame of reference." The early twentieth century historians, who applauded Johnson's policy but deplored his style, were influenced by two factors. The first was their racial views. The entire nation, and, in fact, most of the western world, accepted the idea of black inferiority. This was the scholars' "touchstone" for developing a view of Reconstruction. Since Johnson opposed black political and social equality, scholars viewed his policy favorably. The second factor was a political view of history. This was central to the early style of professional historical writing, though it may seem simplistic today. Andrew Johnson was not a political success. Historians who looked through political glasses graded him a "failure," though they did approve his policy.[3]

The next group sought consciously to revise the view of the first by exonerating Johnson completely. They also fully accepted the touchstone of black inferiority. Several of these writers were not serious scholars, but their work was widely read and did have an impact. They wrote biographies and popular histories. In the process, they reduced the Reconstruction era to a war between an honest and generous President Johnson and the hateful, partisan Radicals. The nuances of the era's political maneuvering and other complicating factors were overlooked or ignored. This chorus was joined by the voice of a respected historian, Howard K. Beale. His hypothesis about the alliance

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[3]Thomas J. Pressly, "Racial Attitudes, Scholarship, and Reconstruction: A Review Essay," Journal of Southern History 32 (February 1966):91.

between Radicals and eastern business interests was accepted but not tested. Johnson was along for the ride--the champion of the masses who tried to protect them from the business plutocracy.[4]

The next group, undoubtedly influenced by the struggle for civil rights, viewed the Radicals positively. Johnson's reputation took a corresponding fall. With psychological, sociological, cultural, and even anthropological views intersecting with history, and a dose of enlightened racial attitudes thrown in, Johnson's reputation had no where to go but down.[5]

This, of course, oversimplifies. While the scholars' frame of reference played a part, so did the process of historical scholarship. The discovery of a new source, the Welles diary, helped change the view to one that was decidedly pro-Johnson. But, just as decidedly, a closer look at the economic issues of the Reconstruction era debunked the Beale view, and a careful examination of Reconstruction leaders in the South and voting records in Congress and the North dispelled the anti-Republican interpretation.

Now that the name calling is over, the South's guilt expiated, the voting records examined, and the myths exploded, perhaps DuBois's "Truth" can be revealed. We can discover what may be the central issue, "why Reconstruction emerged and why it was allowed to lapse."[6] To accomplish this, Thomas Pressly, a noted historian and one of the foremost scholars of Civil War and Reconstruction historiography, has

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[4]Kincaid, "Victims of Circumstance," p. 56.

[5]Castel, "Andrew Johnson," p. 184.

[6]Kincaid, "Victims of Circumstance," p. 63.

suggested using "more systematic and comprehensive research, using quantitative techniques where feasible and relevant to supplement traditional methods."[7] Doing so may get at a clearer view of Reconstruction. In the process, Andrew Johnson's image may never again rise to great heights, but it may be spared the roller coaster ride it took during the first seventy years of this century.

It will be interesting in the years ahead to see if the view of Andrew Johnson changes appreciably. As historian Albert Castel reminded us, "the historiographical rise and fall of Johnson provides a fresh reminder that no history is the last word."[8]

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[7]Pressly, "Racial Attitudes," p. 93.

[8]Castel, "Andrew Johnson," p. 184.

EPILOGUE

A JOHNSON EVALUATION

What of Andrew Johnson himself? Jurors are asked to reach a verdict based on the evidence presented. Readers of history may do the same, realizing the verdict may change later. What is the judgment from the vantage point of 1986? Did Johnson fail?

Johnson the Man. He was intelligent, honest, and dedicated. He had sincere concern for the downtrodden white man. He loved the Union and the Constitution. He wanted to be president. He was enormously popular, for most of his career, in Tennessee and the mid-South.

Johnson the Politician. Johnson's early political career was marked with astonishing success. But he failed in the long run. He sought, but was not elected to, the office of president. He was ignored both by the party that had chosen him for the vice presidency and by his own party. He was impeached. There were and are differing interpretations, but most scholars agree that he was impeached for

political reasons. Putting aside his great earlier success, ultimately Johnson was a political failure.

Johnson the President. He failed, but the blame was not entirely his. He presided at a time of great bitterness and great transition. This was a "double whammy." Johnson's philosophy was rigid and backward-looking when innovation was needed. He had no "hundred days." He did not rally the people or inspire confidence. He was rejected for his political policies much the same way Jimmy Carter was rejected for his economic policies. Both had the misfortune of taking office at a time when the structure of American society was changing markedly. Johnson made mistakes, and serious ones. But mostly he could not keep up with the enormous changes and tremendous political and social forces at work during his tenure. Nor could his successor. Few presidents in our history have been asked to do as much.

The Johnson Administration. From the modern perspective, the Johnson Administration was not a failure. Its success, though, was not due to Johnson, except in the sense that by his opposition he helped bring it about. The nation emerged from Johnson's tenure with civil rights legislation and three constitutional amendments that were later used to safeguard the rights of all Americans. Given the nation's capitulation to southern racial policies in 1877 and later, one wonders when civil rights would have been granted otherwise, and at what cost.

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