



10-1-1965

The Negro's Civil War James M. McPherson

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Recommended Citation

Studies, BYU (1965) "*The Negro's Civil War* James M. McPherson," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 6 : Iss. 3 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol6/iss3/15>

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JAMES M. MCPHERSON. *The Negro's Civil War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1965. Pp. 358. \$6.95.

Joseph Smith's prophecy on war in 1832 contained the prediction of the rebellion of slaves, "who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war." In past decades a number of studies have explored the Negro contribution to the Civil War, including that of some half-million slaves who deserted to Union lines. Professor McPherson adds a smoothly annotated set of source readings that has the cohesiveness of a novel. A substantial number of chapters report on-the-scenes information from and about the approximately 200,000 Negroes in the Union forces (about 10% of Northern manpower), including, by the end of the war, 140 Negro regiments. Other chapters put this war effort in its context of initial official resistance against using colored troops at all to Lincoln's ultimately vigorous promotion of their recruitment. (Imitation on the part of the Confederacy was adopted late as a "dying gesture" in the Negro Soldier Law.) Climaxing chapters chronicle the developing Negro status that came from participation in the burdens of war. This result was clearly seen by many Negroes, of whom one saw in the enlistment invitations "slight atonement for the past and cheerful promise for the future" (p. 176). In an official report to the Secretary of War, General David Hunter paid tribute to the abilities of "the colored regiments" and observed: "They are imbued with a burning faith that now is the time appointed by God, in His All-wise Providence, for the deliverance of their race" (p. 168)