



# The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery

*Don E. Fehrenbacher*

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Many leading historians have argued that the Constitution of the United States was a proslavery document. But in *The Slaveholding Republic*, one of America's most eminent historians refutes this claim in a landmark history that stretches from the Continental Congress to the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln.

Fehrenbacher shows that the Constitution itself was more or less neutral on the issue of slavery and that, in the antebellum period, the idea that the Constitution protected slavery was hotly debated (many Northerners would concede only that slavery was protected by state law, not by federal law). Nevertheless, he also reveals that U.S. policy abroad and in the territories was consistently proslavery. Fehrenbacher makes clear why Lincoln's election was such a shock to the South and shows how Lincoln's approach to emancipation, which seems exceedingly cautious by modern standards, quickly evolved into a "Republican revolution" that ended the anomaly of the United States as a "slaveholding republic."

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