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William H. Harris. *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997. x + 354 pp. $37.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2007-2.

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One of the durable counterfactual assertations of American historiography is that the process of post-Civil War reconstruction would have been different (with the implication of better) had Abraham Lincoln lived to oversee the return of the Confederate South to the Union. In this amorphous characterization, it is never clear exactly what Lincoln would have done, but misty uncertainty always provides the attraction of hypothetical history. In recent years such a comforting interpretation has been subjected to some analysis, using what Lincoln said and did in his encounters with Reconstruction, principally in Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas and North Carolina, as a prognostication for the future.

Most recent evaluations dismiss Lincoln's actions as unimportant and insignificant insofar as they relate to the entirety of Reconstruction policies undertaken after his assassination–see for example Eric Foner in his 1988 study *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. Other scholars interpret Lincoln's policies as primarily undertaken to end the war as quickly as possible. This is certainly the approach taken by David Herbert Donald in his 1996 biography *Lincoln*. Other interpretations focus on Lincoln's Reconstruction programs and suggestions as directed by partisan maneuverings. And of course, there are a wealth of studies by Herman Belz, Hans Trefousse, Michael Les Benedict and Peyton McCrary about early Reconstruction that do not take the president as their point of departure, but instead concentrate on congressional policies, constitutional issues, and programs relating to the liberation of the newly freed.

In this finely detailed and focused study, William Harris shifts the attention to Lincoln by providing readers with a scrupulous evaluation of what Lincoln said and did with regard to the ever enlarging Union-occupied territory. While Eric Foner moved the beginning of Reconstruction from 1865 to 1863, when the president's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction outlined his Ten Percent Plan for southern restoration, Harris pushes back the period even farther. According to Harris, Lincoln initiated the first Reconstruction policies in his inaugural address of March 1861, when he famously announced that he would enforce the laws "so far as practicable" and "would hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government." In the first inaugural, the president denied any intention of a federal invasion or the use of force. And Harris finds in Lincoln's April 1861 dealings with Virginians before their state had seceded further evidence of the president's "first step toward wartime reconstruction" (p. 20).

Overall, the president's policies were consistent, according to Harris, with his theory that secession was impossible. It was individuals who had left the Union. States could not be destroyed, and Lincoln's ever-conservative position, even after the war began, was to restore the southern states to their "proper relation" with the Union. Always the president sought to encourage the southern unionists, whose influence he had exaggerated even during the secession crisis. From Texas to North Carolina, Lincoln depended on these unionists to bring states back into the Union. As he appointed civilian-military governors, he expected them to restore the local self-government on which his system rested. In turn, these newly-cast sovereignties would legislate for the freedmen. Writes Harris, "Lincoln favored a large measure of self-reconstruction, a position that owed a great deal to the nineteenth-century American commitment to local self-government as the cornerstone of republicanism and that nation's federal system of government" (p. 9).

What complicated this process, besides the behavior of generals like Nathaniel Banks, who for various reasons did little to advance the reorganization of former Confederate state governments, was the future of freedmen within any restored communities. In what Harris

calls a "new presidential initiative" in December of 1863, Lincoln offered a comprehensive plan by which white southerners could resume their allegiance to the United States and could breathe life into the state governments. This proposal, which went beyond his previous ad hoc arrangements, upheld the presidential process of emancipation, but did not protect freedmen from any apprenticeship arrangements that might be legally installed by restored state governments. Although Harris does not dwell on this point, in this plan the basic conservatism of the president on race relations is in full view.

Lincoln's last responses to Reconstruction issues, especially as they related to congressional challenges to his plans, are consistent with Harris's interpretation of a president who wished to depend on local action. Harris takes issue with those historians who see the president moving toward harsher, more vigorous measures, and in a striking example of how diligent reexamination of the sources can lead to new interpretations, Harris concludes that Lincoln's marginalia on the Ashley bill does not qualify as an endorsement of this more radical congressional proposal.

With Charity For All makes a substantial contribution to understanding both Lincoln and the early procedures of Reconstruction. The detail on the relations between the president, the military, and the unionists in Tennessee, the Southwest, and Arkansas is superb. Harris has probed the internal workings of the president's policies, and he makes a good case for his proposition that Lincoln never changed his fundamental approach, even as the issues surrounding restoration varied with the course of the war.

Overall, this is a policy study that has little to say about the circumstances of those affected in the reconstructed states. Nor is Harris much concerned with the partisan politics that others have argued shaped the president's ideas toward what he invariably called "restoration." Nor is there much evidence to support Harris's assertion that "Lincoln's conservative leadership prevented a truly radical reordering of the South when it was most vulnerable to revolutionary changes–during the war and in the moment of defeat" (p. 262). Besides a passing mention, there is too little attention paid to the aggrieving issue that lay on the horizon–whether Congress, the executive, or the states should/would control what briefly became the Reconstruction of the Union. But Harris's book will stand for many years as the authoritative monograph on Lincoln and his ideas and policies directed toward the goal of reestablishing the Union. Based on meticulous research, it will be essential reading for students of the Civil War period.

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