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Apostles of disunion quizlet

H-NET BOOK REVIEW Published H-South@h-net.msu.edu (January 2002) by Charles B. Rosa. Apostles disunion: Southern secession of commissioners and causes of civil war. Nation divided: New study in the history of the Civil War. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001. x + 124 p. Fabric (\$22.95). ISBN 0-8139-2036-1. Reviewed for H-South by Christopher Olsen, Department of History, Indiana State University. Secession, slavery and racism: Confederates vs. Neo-Confederates This slender volume explores the work chipped commissioners sent from the Deep South to other slave states in the winter of 1860-1861. The men have been accused of advocating secession and urging fellow Souths to follow them out of the Union. Charles B. Dew rightly notes that historians try to uncover the emotions and motives behind disunion by rarely examining the words of these commissioners. Men themselves are routinely ignored by historians altogether or dismissed as minor characters. Rosa has speeches or letters from forty-two of the fifty-two men who served as commissioners. They were all slaves to politicians with different experiences and partisan affiliations; most of them were natives from the states to which they were appointed. This is not a full study of men or their entire work, but it is an important contribution to the literature of secession and a good introduction to the story of these neglected characters. Rosa apparently intends to book both for academics and more general readers. The text is barely eighty pages long, followed by an addendum and only a minimum of notes, which should be appealing for use in the classroom. Prose is bright, jargon-free, and contains enough narrative detaching that even budding students will be able to watch the book. But the material is sufficiently complex, and representative documents well selected, so it should also stimulate discussion among advanced readers. For the book's primary audience - non academics and budding students - the author's intention clearly is to abuse the (incredibly) increasingly popular notion that secession was not about preserving slavery and racial subordination (and Southern culture based on them), but rather to assert some abstract commitment to states' rights. Academic historians have, of course, long since concluded that states' rights were a means, not the primary motive, for secession and war. Dew's main goal is a somewhat obscure Neo-Confederate movement, including the League of the South and patrons of neo-Confederate websites, bumper stickers, and T-shirts (10). Rightly notes that the separatists themselves have spoken much more openly about slavery than the current neo-Nazis, they seem willing to do so (10). The first chapter of the book will clarify the importance of its on recent controversies over Confederate flags in many states and Virginia's Confederate history month, among other things. The author writes with some obvious passion. A native South American remembers my boyish dreaming of Confederate glory, and admits that he is still struck by deep sadness when I read about the material on which this study is based (2). Not surprisingly, Rosa has little trouble demonstrating her primary thesis. Dissenting commissioners repeated the same message wherever they went: Lincoln and Republicans were committed to introducing racial equality or promoting amalgamated; secession and independence offered white men the only alternative to degradation and cultural destruction. The Republican threat, the men argued, was indeed triple: racial equality, racial war and racial amalgamation. The authors of Mississippi's Statement of Immediate Causes, for example, argued that the North advocates black equality, socially and politically, and supports the uprising and incense at our center (13). Alabama's Leroy Walker summed up that a Republican government would cost the Souths first, our property, then our freedoms, and finally the sacred purity of our daughters (79). Perhaps the most effective evidence Rosa has to offer is gross racism, which has intermittently made many commissioners' appeals. Thoughtful and open-minded readers will recognize that preserving slavery and racial purity - of the Ku Klux Klan variety - were fundamental principles of the Confederacy. As Stephen Hale, Alabama's commissioner for Kentucky, wrote, the Republican victory was nothing less than an open declaration of war, for the triumph of this new theory of government destroying the property of the South, setting waste its fields, and solemnly all the horrors of the San Domingo Servile Uprising, handing its citizens to assassinations and her wives and daughters for pollution and violations to please the desire of semi-civilized Africans (54). Dew touts Hale's letter as the best summary of separatist arguments about slavery and race - indeed, citing a passage cited above on three separate occasions - and its full text is set out in the addendum. Another of the strengths of the book is Dew's effective juxta-sided comments from the same men before and after the war. Through the words of Jefferson Davis, Alexander Stephens, R.L. M Curry, John Smith Preston, and others, the author reveals that ex-Confederates created the myth of states' rights causation when they wrote the Lost Cause memoir. Before and during the war, these men blamed the arguments for the independence and nationalism of the Confederacy with regard to slavery and racism. After the defeat, however, they sang a different tune. Stephens, of course, gave his famous cornerstone speech in March, and Rosa presents a thorough discussion of his remarks. In his memoirs of 1868, however, Stephens insisted that the war was a dispute between the principles of the federation on the one hand, and centralism or consolidation on the other. Slavery was the question, on which these antagonistic principles were eventually collided (16). After the war Preston defended the Confederacy as a noble defense of true constitutional freedom, far from its antebellum characterization of Republican canting, zealots, festering in the licentiousness of repeal and amalgamation (75). For specialists, of course, these topics - if not specific material - will be very familiar. Many historians of the separatist movement will object to dew's claim that there is no better place to look [for the separatist mind] than in speeches and letters to men who served their states as breakaway commissioners on the eve of the conflict (18). Moreover, perhaps few would agree that the Commissioners were asked to provide such an explanation [for secession] - to inform the Southern people of the dark forces threatening their region and to direct their states to seek refuge outside the Union (24). Editors, politicians and a number of other public speakers made in the 1950s arguments to explain and justify secession they had already received a full statement when Lincoln was elected. Rosa also does not involve historiography; his recent scholarship list contains only two books published since 1988 (one of them a collection of essays). More frustrating for some readers will be the lack of attention on how slavery conjulies different images for different listeners. Some of the most innovative works on secession - books by Lacy Ford or Stephanie McCurry, for example - considered different meanings of slavery in the context of Southern political culture and secession. The call to protect slavery from black Republicanism was associated with the preservation of regional equality and honor, personal manhood, the rights of owners and spouses of white men and others - in short, the duties and privileges of white men were at stake, as well as the real future of slavery and racial supremacy. None of these objections takes the author's primary thesis or the effectiveness of the book. In fact, much of the material in the book can be even more valuable than a teaching tool for advanced students. Careful reading and discussion should force them to engage in the fact that many South Koreans view slavery as more than just an institution and racial supremacy. For example, the words of Leonidas W. Spratt of South Carolina, Commissioner for Florida, as well as slavery: We knew that the men of the South were too instructed and too courageous to submit to the seriousness of ultimate subordination (44). Religious imagery infuses speeches of Mississippi's Fulton Anderson. Northerners were harmed, he said, by an infidel bigotry that shook men and women into believing that we were a race lower than they were in morality and civilization. Republicans were determined to lead the holy crusade on our behalf in search of the destruction of this institution that . . . is at the heart of our social and political fabric (63). Numerous passages echoed ubiquitous notions - always associated with Southern speakers - about degradation and disgrace. In short, Dew's work should force readers to consider many topics related to slavery that have informed the secession crisis and influenced how Southern men understood the imperative dangers that Republicanism brought home. The inclusion of two complete texts in the Appendix is particularly welcome in this respect. The Apostles Disunion would, even if it won't, end the debate over whether the South's main goal in 1861 was to defend its slave-based culture. The book offers us all who struggle with the irrepressible myth of states' rights devotion an effective way to force students to confront the integral place of slavery and racism in the mind of the Old South and the popular movement for secession. Copyright (c) 2002 from H-Net, all rights reserved. This work can be copied for non-profit educational use if the correct credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu. H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

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