

History 322

Re: Notes w/ McCurry essay

Source: Freehling, RAH

Notes on unlimited Patriarchy:

Blending social and political history.

Key southern disunionists pushed this creed of patriarchy to a stunning extreme. Their version of unlimited paternalism extended beyond dominance in the homeland enclosure over women and slaves and extended to male southern nonslaveholders and helped precipitate the revolution of 1860--or the secession movement in the Deep South.

[Aside: The southern slaveholder was among the most suspicious of Americans. He did not trust very broadly and carried seeds of deep distrust of others. This distrust we have to credit in large part to the slave. Slaveholders caught up in their creed of paternalism referred to slaves as "family friends." This characterization was inherent in the model of absolute power above and (required to complete the charade of willing consent from below. The patriarch's disenfranchised, dependent white wife and children seemed to consent to his absolute rule over the household. The southern slaveholder tried to make his rule over the "family friends" one based on consent, a willingness to live and work under the superior wisdom and guidance of the master.

It was this conceit or illusion that was so important to the slaveholder's sense of pride and self-esteem in that it portrayed slavery as a paternalistic and benevolent institution and not the insidious moral horror portrayed by northern abolitionists and the enemies of the Peculiar Institution.

Slaves as Sambos. The fawning slave who was truly grateful for the care and attention received from the master--performances when the master returned, at Christmas celebrations in the Big House or down in the slave quarters w/ ole master handing out Xmas gifts, and when visitors came to the plantation (especially foreign visitors).

What was behind the mask of Sambo. The reign of terror on the plantation when coercion was necessary to extract obedience and to make slaves work to task. In reality the day-to-day plantation life more often than not resembled low-grade guerrilla warfare than the charade of a caring patriarch and consenting slaves.]

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Notes on unlimited patriarchy:

Reference McCurry when she remarks about the illusion that yeoman farmers bought into by modeling and accepting the patriarchal model.

Despite all the solidarity between the planter or the big slaveholders and the yeoman farmer along sex and racial lines, key members of the master race and master sex did not trust the yeoman farmer when it came to matters as supreme as the defense and survival of the slave regime. They did not trust a governmental system in which those who did not own the country were still allowed the right to vote and influence policy.

From the worldview of the planters this distrust was probably realistic.

This despite historians early views that the Slave South was a monolith. Monolithic in the sense that after 1830-31 it was a Closed Society. And solid in the sense that the white ruling race (males) subscribed to what has been called the egalitarian majoritarianism of the Herrenvolk Democracy--in which race (and sex) aligned white males regardless of their class distinctions into a solid fist-like unity.

The numbers game.

Disunionists saw in the numbers a great peril to the continued survival and progress of the slave system. Secessionists could not trust the majority of nonslaveholding whites to support secession. They knew that if secession was thrown open to all white voting males that a majority would vote against disunion.

The eager secessionists (after Lincoln's election) therefore maneuvered to have the first secessionist decision made not in some South-wide convention or referendum where a southern majority would trounce them, but in South Carolina, the state where they could most easily rally a majority for disunion. After the So. Carolina faction of the South seceded, the majority in other southern states would be forced to decide (not whether secession was wise) but whether or not they were ready to take up arms at fellow southerners.

The same ploy was used by Jefferson Davis when he ordered the guns of Charleston to open up on Ft. Sumter 5 months later. It was to force the Border States to fish or cut bait. To coerce them on the proposition of whether they wanted to join Lincoln's armies prepared to invade the South (not really on whether they were in favor of the desperate ploy of secession--an entirely different matter. (The irony--firing on the Fort opening shots to end slavery)

3/1 or  
Patriarchy



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Addendum notes:

The peril as seen by the key disunionists in the decade of the 1850s.

1. Border States: Due to slave drain or weakening of the institution of slavery a Lincoln presidency was a potential disaster for the slave regime because Lincoln could use patronage to build a southern wing of the Republican party in the border states. Ultimately he could ween away these states from the slave system. Slavepower was conscious that only 1 voter in 8 in the border states was a slaveholder.

2. Added to a weening away policy in the border states the Republican party now in control of the White House was a party that had announced its national purpose was to contain slavery where it already existed--no slave state expansion.

3. In time as free states entered from the national territories and the border states were lost to the slave regime, the slave states would contract in numbers over the years. This would allow the dominant national party to outlaw slavery by constitutional amendment. (It would have the 3/4s vote to get such an amendment passed).

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Some generalizations about patriarchy:

Not a creed that was just peculiar to the South or even to America.

But we should recognize that throughout most of our history women, blacks, and Native Americans could not vote and could not serve in Congress--were in fact dead as far as the political polity of this nation was concerned. These priveleges were limited to the Great White (male) race. Those who feel outside made up about 80% of the population of pre-Civil War America.

Some squestions for McCurry:

Paternalism vis-a-vis males ended when. See Seth story

According to McCurry did class consciousness exist in So. Carolina? Answer is yes but it was overwhelmed by sex and race consciousness or in the model subscribed to by all males of patriarchy.

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Re: Notes for Social History & Civil War

Previewing Assigned Articles:

Kemp essay: He looks at two New Hampshire towns, that is the focus is community and its support of the war. This is home front history of the war.

--Compare and contrast set up

--Who served; what social classes in the two towns answered Lincoln's call to the colors; to defend republicanism, the last great hope of earth.

--Losses and their impact on the home front

R. Mitchell: Check his methodology; his sources.

Influence of community values and culture on fighting men.

Does Mitchell's essay give us any insight into how Union soldiers were motivated, how they experienced the war, and why they fought. Does Mitchell flatly state or imply that great ideas or ideology ( a la Lincoln)were influential shaping factors?

D. Faust: There is a conceit or a myth that Southern women were the "she devils" of the Confederacy. That Johnny Reb would rather stand and fight the invading Union troops even unto death rather than return back alive but carrying the stigma of "betrayal of the great cause" and face southern womanhood. Faust is one of the most prominent current historians of the South and has done highly respected scholarship on the Confederate homefront. What role does she assign to women as to the question: Why the South Lost the Civil War?