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The South and the Slavery Controversy, 1793–1860

PART I: Reviewing the Chapter

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to

1. point out the economic strengths and weaknesses of the “Cotton Kingdom.”
2. describe the southern planter aristocracy and identify its strengths and weaknesses.
3. describe the nonslaveholding white majority of the South and explain its relations with both the planter elite and the black slaves.
4. describe the nature of African-American life, both free and slave, before the Civil War.
5. describe the effects of the “peculiar institution” of slavery on both blacks and whites.
6. explain why abolitionism was at first unpopular in the North and describe how it gradually gained strength.
7. describe the fierce southern response to abolitionism and the growing defense of slavery as a “positive good.”

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **oligarchy** Rule by a small elite. “. . . the South was . . . not so much a democracy as an oligarchy. . . .”
2. **medievalism** Devotion to the social values, customs, or beliefs thought to be characteristic of the European Middle Ages. “Southern aristocrats . . . strove to perpetuate a type of medievalism that had died out in Europe. . . .”
3. **commission** Fee paid to an agent in a transaction, usually as a percentage of the sale. “They were pained by the heavy outward flow of commissions. . . .”
4. **middlemen** In commerce, those who stand between the producer and the retailer or consumer. “[Southern planters] were pained by the heavy outward flow . . . to northern middlemen, bankers, agents, and shippers.”
5. **racism** Belief in the superiority of one race over another or behavior reflecting such a belief. “Thus did the logic of economics join with the illogic of racism in buttressing the slave system.”
6. **fecund** Fruitful in bearing numerous children. “. . . some of these fecund females were promised their freedom. . . .”
7. **overseer** Someone who governs or directs the work of another. “. . . under the watchful eyes and ready whip-hand of a white overseer or black ‘driver.’ ”
8. **sabotage** Intentional destruction or damage of goods, machines, or productive processes. “They sabotaged expensive equipment. . . .”

9. **fratricidal** Literally, concerning the killing of brothers; often applied to the killing of relatives or countrymen. "... supported a frightfully costly fratricidal war as the price of emancipation."
10. **incendiary** A person who willfully stirs up riot or rebellion. "The nullification crisis ... conjur[ed] up nightmares of black incendiaries and abolitionist devils."

PART II: Checking Your Progress

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, mark **T**. Where it is false, mark **F**, and correct it in the space immediately below.

- ___ 1. After 1800, the prosperity of both North and South became heavily dependent on growing, manufacturing, and exporting cotton.
- ___ 2. The southern planter aristocracy was strongly attracted to medieval cultural ideals.
- ___ 3. The growing of cotton on large plantations was economically efficient and agriculturally sound.
- ___ 4. Most southern slaveowners owned twenty or more slaves.
- ___ 5. In 1860, three-fourths of all white southerners owned no slaves at all.
- ___ 6. Poor whites supported slavery because it made them feel racially superior and because they hoped someday to be able to buy slaves.
- ___ 7. The one group of southern whites who opposed slavery consisted of those who lived in mountain areas far from plantations and from blacks.
- ___ 8. Free blacks enjoyed considerable status and wealth in both the North and the South before the Civil War.
- ___ 9. Slaveowners generally treated their black slaves as a valuable economic investment.
- ___ 10. Slavery almost completely destroyed the black family.
- ___ 11. American slaves used many small methods of resistance to demonstrate their hatred of slavery and their yearning for freedom.
- ___ 12. Abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison quickly attained great popularity in the North.
- ___ 13. While moralistic white abolitionists like Garrison refused to become involved in politics, practical black abolitionists like Douglass looked for a way to abolish slavery through political action.
- ___ 14. After about 1830, the South no longer tolerated even moderate pro-abolitionist discussion.
- ___ 15. Southern whites increasingly argued that their slaves were happier and better off than northern wage earners.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and write the proper letter in the space provided.

- ___ 1. The primary market for southern cotton production was
 - a. the North.
 - b. France.
 - c. Latin America.
 - d. Britain.

- ___ 2. The invention that transformed the southern cotton economy was
 - a. the sewing machine.
 - b. the mechanical cotton-picker.
 - c. the cotton gin.
 - d. the steamboat.

- ___ 3. A large portion of the profits from cotton growing went to
 - a. northern traders and European manufacturers.
 - b. southern and northern slave traders.
 - c. southern textile industrialists.
 - d. midwestern farmers and cattle growers.

- ___ 4. Among the economic consequences of the South's cotton economy was
 - a. increasing immigration of laborers from Europe.
 - b. a dependence on the North for trade and manufacturing.
 - c. a stable system of credit and finance.
 - d. a relatively equal distribution of property and wealth.

- ___ 5. Most southern slaveowners held
 - a. over a hundred slaves.
 - b. over fifty slaves.
 - c. fewer than ten slaves.
 - d. only one slave.

- ___ 6. Even though they owned no slaves, most southern whites supported the slave system because
 - a. they were bribed by the planter class.
 - b. they enjoyed the economic benefits of slavery.
 - c. they felt racially superior to blacks and hoped to be able to buy slaves.
 - d. they disliked the northern abolitionists.

- ___ 7. The only group of white southerners who strongly opposed slavery and the slaveowners were
 - a. poor southern whites.
 - b. urban merchants and manufacturers.
 - c. religious leaders.
 - d. Appalachian mountain whites.

- ___ 8. The condition of the 500,000 or so free blacks was
- considerably better in the North than in the South.
 - notably improving in the decades before the Civil War.
 - as bad or worse in the North than in the South.
 - politically threatened but economically secure.
- ___ 9. Most of the growth in the African-American slave population before 1860 came from
- the illegal importation of slaves from Africa.
 - the re-enslavement of formerly free blacks.
 - natural reproduction.
 - the incorporation into the United States of new slave territories.
- ___ 10. Most slaveowners treated their slaves as
- objects to be beaten and brutalized as often as possible.
 - economically profitable investments.
 - members of their extended family.
 - sources of technological innovation.
- ___ 11. The African-American family under slavery was
- generally stable and supportive.
 - almost nonexistent.
 - largely female-dominated.
 - seldom able to raise children to adulthood.
- ___ 12. Most of the early abolitionists were motivated by
- a desire to see an independent black republic in America.
 - anger at the negative economic consequences of slavery.
 - religious feeling against the "sin" of slavery.
 - a philosophical commitment to racial integration.
- ___ 13. The most prominent black abolitionist leader was
- Sojourner Truth.
 - David Walker.
 - William Lloyd Garrison.
 - Frederick Douglass.
- ___ 14. After 1830, most southerners came to look on slavery as
- a curse on their region.
 - a necessary evil.
 - a positive good.
 - a threat to their social ideals.
- ___ 15. By the 1850s, most northerners could be described as
- opposed to slavery but also hostile to immediate abolitionists.
 - fervently in favor of immediate abolition.
 - sympathetic to white southern arguments in defense of slavery.
 - eager to let the slaveholding South break apart the Union.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

- _____ 1. Term for the South that emphasized its economic dependence on a single staple product
- _____ 2. Prosouthern New England textile owners who were economically tied to the southern "lords of the lash"
- _____ 3. British novelist whose romantic vision of a feudal society made him highly popular in the South
- _____ 4. The poor, vulnerable group that was the object of prejudice in the North and despised as a "third race" in the South
- _____ 5. Theodore Dwight Weld's powerful antislavery book
- _____ 6. The area of the South where most slaves were held, stretching from South Carolina across to Louisiana
- _____ 7. Organization founded in 1817 to send blacks back to Africa
- _____ 8. The group of theology students, led by Theodore Dwight Weld, who were expelled for abolitionist activity and later became leading preachers of the anti-slavery gospel
- _____ 9. William Lloyd Garrison's fervent abolitionist newspaper that preached an immediate end to slavery
- _____ 10. Garrisonian abolitionist organization, founded in 1833, that included the eloquent Wendell Phillips among its leaders
- _____ 11. Strict rule passed by prosouthern Congressmen in 1836 to prohibit all discussion of slavery in the House of Representatives
- _____ 12. Northern antislavery politicians, like Abraham Lincoln, who rejected radical abolitionism but sought to prohibit the expansion of slavery in the western territories

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Sir Walter Scott | A. Wealthy New York abolitionist merchant whose home was demolished by a mob in 1834 |
| ___ 2. Harriet Beecher Stowe | B. Visionary black preacher whose bloody slave rebellion in 1831 tightened the reins of slavery in the South |
| ___ 3. Nat Turner | C. Midwestern institution whose president expelled eighteen students for organizing a debate on slavery |
| ___ 4. Liberia | D. New York free black woman who fought for emancipation and women's rights |
| ___ 5. Theodore Dwight Weld | E. Leading radical abolitionist who burned the Constitution as "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell" |
| ___ 6. Lewis Tappan | F. Author of an abolitionist novel that portrayed the separation of slave families by auction |
| ___ 7. Lane Theological Seminary | G. Site of the last major southern debate over slavery and emancipation, in 1831-1832 |

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ___ 8. William Lloyd Garrison | H. English novelist whose romantic medievalism encouraged the semifeudal ideals of the southern planter aristocracy |
| ___ 9. David Walker | I. Black abolitionist who visited West Africa in 1859 to examine sites where African-Americans might relocate |
| ___ 10. Sojourner Truth | J. Former president who fought for the right to discuss slavery in Congress |
| ___ 11. Martin Delany | K. Illinois editor whose death at the hands of a mob made him an abolitionist martyr |
| ___ 12. Frederick Douglass | L. West African republic founded in 1822 by freed blacks from the United States |
| ___ 13. Virginia legislature | M. Escaped slave and great black abolitionist who fought to end slavery through political action |
| ___ 14. John Quincy Adams | N. Black abolitionist writer who called for a bloody end to slavery in an appeal of 1829 |
| ___ 15. Elijah Lovejoy | O. Leader of the "Lane Rebels" who wrote the powerful antislavery work <i>American Slavery As It Is</i> |

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 5.

- ___ The last slaves to be legally imported from Africa enter the United States.
- ___ A radical abolitionist editor is murdered, and so becomes a martyr to the antislavery cause.
- ___ A radical abolitionist newspaper and a slave rebellion spread fear through the South.
- ___ A new invention increases the efficiency of cotton production, laying the basis for the vast Cotton Kingdom.
- ___ A group of seminary students expelled for their abolitionist views spread the antislavery gospel far and wide.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

| Cause | Effect |
|--|--|
| ___ 1. Whitney's cotton gin and southern frontier expansionism | A. Often resulted in the cruel separation of black families |
| ___ 2. Excessive soil cultivation and financial speculation | B. Kept poor, nonslaveholding whites committed to a system that actually harmed them |
| ___ 3. Belief in white superiority and the hope of owning slaves | C. Aroused deep fears of rebellion and ended rational discussion of slavery in the South |
| ___ 4. The selling of slaves at auctions | D. Made abolitionists personally unpopular but convinced many Northerners that slavery was a threat to American freedom |
| ___ 5. The slaves' love of freedom and hatred of their condition | E. Caused slaves to work slowly, steal from their masters, and frequently run away |
| ___ 6. The religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening | F. Stirred a fervent abolitionist commitment to fight the "sin" of slavery |

- ___ 7. Politically minded abolitionists like Frederick Douglass
 - ___ 8. Garrison's *Liberator* and Nat Turner's bloody slave rebellion
 - ___ 9. White southern defenses of slavery as a "positive good"
 - ___ 10. The constant abolitionist agitation in the North
- G. Turned the South into a booming one-crop economy where "cotton was king"
 - H. Opposed Garrison and organized the Liberty party and the Free Soil party
 - I. Created dangerous weaknesses beneath the surface prosperity of the southern cotton economy
 - J. Widened the moral and political gap between the white South and the rest of the Western world

G. Developing Historical Skills

Visual Images and Slavery

The bitter controversy over slavery is reflected in the visual images (drawings, prints, photographs) of the "peculiar institution." Some images present slavery from an abolitionist viewpoint, as a moral horror. Others depict it in benign or even favorable terms. Under the six illustrations in this chapter on pp. 361, 362, 368–370, 372, and 375, answer the following questions.

1. Which three images depict the worst features of the slave system? What visual details emphasize the mistreatment of the slaves?

2. Which three images present slavery in relatively positive terms? What visual details show slavery in a favorable light?

3. The photograph on p. 369 seems neither overtly "proslavery" nor "antislavery." How might supporters or opponents of slavery each make use of this image?

4. How is the relation of slaves to their white masters depicted differently in the two prints on p. 362 and p. 368?

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 17, answer the following questions.

1. Which six states contained nearly all the major cotton-production areas of the South in 1860?
2. Approximately how many slaveowning families owned fifty or more slaves?
3. Which five states contained a substantial number of slave-majority counties in 1820?
4. List the six slaveholding states, not counting Texas and Florida, that contained the most counties with less than 10 percent slaves in 1860.
5. What were the four last northern states to abolish slavery after the American Revolution?

Map Challenge

Using the maps on pp. 363–365, write a brief essay explaining the relation between the areas of cotton production and the areas with the heaviest concentration of slaves in 1820 and 1860. Include some discussion of why Virginia and the Carolinas had substantial areas with more than 50 percent slaves but almost no major cotton-production areas.

PART III: Applying What You Have Learned

1. Describe the complex structure of southern society. What role did plantation owners, small slaveholders, independent white farmers, poor whites, free blacks, and black slaves each have in the southern social order?
2. Compare the attitudes and practices regarding slavery and race relations in the North and the South. Explain the common statement that southerners liked blacks as individuals but despised the race, while northerners claimed to like blacks as a race but disliked individuals (p. 364).
3. How did the reliance on cotton production and slavery affect the South economically, socially, and morally, and how did this reliance affect its relations with the North?
4. How did slavery affect the lives of African-Americans in both the South and the North?
5. A large majority of Americans, both North and South, strongly rejected radical abolitionism. Why, then, did abolitionism and antislavery come to shape American politics in the 1840s and 1850s?
6. In what ways did slavery make the South a fundamentally different kind of society from the North? Could the South ever have abolished slavery gradually on its own, as the North did after the American Revolution? (See Chapter 9.) Why or why not?