

played games of chance like faro “so severely compromised virtue, honor, and the rule of law” that they needed to be ejected from Vicksburg in order for the city to reclaim its respectability (p. 160). Rothman carefully intertwines the gambling riot with Stewart’s story to show that, in reality, the entire Old Southwest was caught up in one massive gamble, built on an unsustainable mountain of credit, debt, and slavery that could come crashing down at any moment (and actually did in the Panic of 1837). According to the author, the gambles that created the flush times vividly illustrate how Americans understood and participated in the development of American capitalism and how social mores and respectability worked at the same time to mediate that raw capitalistic greed.

For historians of early Arkansas, Rothman’s book is especially important as the various kinds of gambling that created the flush times also put Arkansas on the path to statehood. Arkansas, though not of direct interest to Rothman, makes several bit appearances in the work. Of course, land speculation, economic anxieties, cotton cultivation, and a growing slave population simultaneously occurred in Arkansas, making *Flush Times and Fever Dreams* an important read.

Although this is an important and engaging work, Rothman is far more interested in how the growth of the slave population and fears of slave revolt affected the white imagination than in African-American responses to these flush times. The few slave voices he does include do reveal a significant and interesting perspective on the fearful and anxious white population. More of these voices might have further developed this part of Rothman’s argument, yet his important contribution to the history of capitalism and the Old Southwest easily stands without it.

Overall, Rothman presents an engaging, page-turning account of the development of the Old Southwest, intertwining capitalism and slavery with concerns over respectability and social standing. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams* stands as an important contribution to antebellum historiography and helps us understand the true dimensions of how the southern frontier developed.

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*Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South.* By Charity R. Carney. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univer-

sity Press, 2011. Pp. xi, 188. Acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

In *Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South*, Charity Carney examines how Methodist ministers created a definition of masculinity that was consonant both with their culture and their calling. It is a clerical dilemma as old as the Rule of St. Benedict's liberal use of Roman martial language to define the life of the ascetic. Thirteen hundred years on from St. Benedict, Carney argues that the dual forces of the Methodist stress on the doctrine of the spiritual equality of all believers and the particular demands placed on the circuit rider led to the creation of a culture that both conformed to and challenged prevailing southern norms.

Drawing heavily on Bertram Wyatt-Brown's notion of the South as an honor culture, Carney assesses Methodist ministers in both the public and private spheres in chapters on manhood, patriarchy and church polity, marriage and family, and slavery. Working primarily from ministerial biographies and Methodist periodicals from roughly 1790 to 1860, she argues that Methodist ministers, whose calling precluded them from gambling, drinking, politics, and other masculine pursuits, established their own conventions of masculinity as a clerical brotherhood. High among these were participation in public or printed debates, the fortitude to discipline erring church members, and a rugged simplicity of dress, all witnessing to the belief that "the more honor they could bring to their God, the more honor they brought to themselves" (p. 37). Bishops, presiding elders, and ministers were to exercise patriarchal authority over those in their charge and filial piety toward those in authority over them. Carney argues that southern ideas of patriarchy had a particularly notable influence on the strength of the office of bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South following the break with northern Methodists in 1844.

In the domestic sphere, Carney stresses that the doctrine of spiritual equality, which emphasized that all believers were children of God, created particular tensions with southern norms. For ministers' wives, who shared the circuit riders' financial hardships and managed the household during their long absences, this meant an unusual level of partnership and mutual support. For children, this meant that claims to paternal obedience were not absolute when they contradicted the commands of God and that devout children could sometimes be examples and guides to their elders. By viewing the family as a "spiritual system," Methodists, Carney believes, developed a particular interest in the spirituality of childhood, gave women enhanced authority, and "caused many ministers . . . to challenge

the ideal household structure in favor of a more flexible organization that gave the most pious member more power” (p. 92).

In what is likely her most controversial chapter, Carney argues that Methodist ministers in the South walked a fine line on slavery, on the one hand acceding to, then endorsing, the peculiar institution, but, on the other, upholding the belief that the soul was always free. She produces numerous examples to support her contention that “in keeping with their spiritualized view of the master-slave relationship, ministers adopted the idea of slaveholder paternalism but combined it with an egalitarian religious ideal” (p. 117). Sadly, the evidence she musters of segregated churches and homiletic anecdotes of pious uncles converting their masters does little to bolster her argument for a distinct form of Methodist paternalism and may actually compare rather poorly with the antebellum work of the Presbyterian ministers of Erskine Clarke’s *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (2005).

Carney has examined Methodist sources from across the South to create a thorough portrait of antebellum ministers and their households. One might wish that she had pulled back her focus a bit to consider how Methodism’s growth from 60,000 to 1.6 million members during this period and its rising social status also played into the tensions she describes. Useful as well would be more comparison to other southern denominations to test her case for a Methodist exceptionalism during these decades when views of womanhood, childhood, and slavery were in rapid flux in America. As it stands, she has produced a book that will be a valuable reference for historians of the South, of American religion, and of Arkansas, considering Methodist churches far outnumbered those of any other denomination in the state in 1860.

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*Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War.* By Megan Kate Nelson. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012. Pp. xvii, 332. Acknowledgments, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$69.95, cloth; \$24.95, paper.)

War inflicts destruction. On the surface, this statement is a truism, but Megan Kate Nelson uncovers the multiple layers of meaning that humans assign to the ruins of war, particularly those of cities, houses, forests, and