

The volume's third section considers the ways that slavery's capitalism shaped the Northern states, from trading ties between New England and Caribbean colonies to the development of a shipping industry devoted to the coastal transport of slaves to American investment in Cuba. The final section considers how slavery molded the nation's most prominent institutions: higher education, the law, and politics. All combined, the essays make a convincing case that slavery's capitalism had dramatic effects on national institutions, markets, and the place of the United States in the world. The volume offers not just a study in political economy, however, and contributors are keenly aware of how capitalism shaped the social dimensions of slavery as well.

Despite its strengths, *Slavery's Capitalism* is not comprehensive. Although several contributors touch on environmental factors, the volume misses an opportunity to directly consider how slavery's capitalism affected American and global environments. Given the long engagement that

environmental historians have had with the history of capitalism—even predating recent interest in the concept—this is a significant oversight, and it would help to make an even stronger case for just how slavery fit into American capitalist development.

Nevertheless, *Slavery's Capitalism* promises to be a “new history of American economic development,” and it largely succeeds in nationalizing and internationalizing the story of slavery and providing new dimensions on the dynamics of the institution. Although the essays cover a range of topics, they mesh together well—largely thanks to the introductory essay and organization—and the volume stakes out important new directions for the scholarship on slavery. The book will be of interest to all scholars of nineteenth-century America, not just to historians of slavery or the South.

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### *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era*

By Mark A. Lause

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016. Pp. viii, 223. Illustrations, notes, index. \$95.00.)

In *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era*, Mark Lause argues that

the rise of spiritualism influenced the rise of the Republican Party in the 1850s and affected the Radical

Republican agenda of equal rights during Reconstruction.

Spiritualism began in western New York in 1848, when sisters Kate and Margaret Fox claimed they could communicate with the dead through a series of rappings. The sisters became an overnight sensation and, for reasons that historians still debate, millions of people subscribed to the belief that mediums could speak for the dead and bring them into séances with the public. The movement, which peaked just after the Civil War, spawned crowded public lectures, several spiritualist journals, and dozens of spiritualist organizations throughout the North and the Midwest. During its heyday, many spiritualists claimed that the likes of Washington, Jefferson, and the other founders came back from the dead to decry the antebellum crisis of the Union and to condemn the institution of slavery. Like other mass social movements of the antebellum period, spiritualism did not find fertile ground in the South, which remained traditional and skeptical of social change.

The greatest contribution of *Free Spirits* is its exhaustive review of published spiritualist literature, showing that “many, if not most, Republicans in New England and New York dabbled in spiritualism” (p. 43). Impelled by their spiritualist belief that the after-life was one of equality and union, these nascent Republicans rejected the antebellum status quo of a society divided along lines of race, class, and gender. The Republican spiritualists were instead drawn to the Unionist policies of Abraham Lincoln who,

according to the author, “played a medium-like role in channeling” the unity of the Republic (p. 66). Lincoln’s administration included a network of active spiritualists who carried out and shaped the president’s policies.

The most controversial aspect of the book is the author’s suggestion that Lincoln himself was a spiritualist. Lincoln was not merely a passive participant at an occasional séance but was someone who drew inspiration from spiritualism, as evidenced in his political rhetoric and his political beliefs on equality. Lause speculates that Lincoln’s active spiritualism was excised from the historical record by his son, Robert Lincoln, and others who destroyed much of Lincoln’s correspondence in order to preserve his reputation after his assassination.

In the war’s aftermath, spiritualists were dominant among Radical Republicans whose agenda sought to install liberty, equality, and fraternity in the post-war reconstruction of the South. Reconstruction policies failed and spiritualism declined after the Civil War. Lause argues that the rise and proliferation of Christian denominations drew people away from the séance in the parlor and back to the “well managed public space of the church” (p. 148).

The book contains its share of problems. Although clear evidence exists that the Civil War influenced spiritualism, the influence of spiritualism on the war is more tendentious. It is suggestive but not conclusive that the many spiritualists in Lincoln’s inner circle influenced policy. The

author offers a paucity of citations on the more recent literature on spiritualism, specifically material focused on spiritualism and politics. He places overreliance on the published work of spiritualists, whose works are too often used uncritically. Finally, in terms of the controversial assertion that Lincoln was an active spiritualist, one of the key pieces of evidence supporting this idea comes from the memoir of Lincoln's housekeeper, Mariah Vance,

but Lincoln scholars have discredited that work and noted that some of it was forged. Overall, the book raises interesting questions about spiritualism and Republican politics in the Civil War era and should inspire further research.

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### *The End of Days: African American Religion and Politics in the Age of Emancipation*

By Matthew Harper

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2016. Pp. 211. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

In *The End of Days*, Matthew Harper explores how Christian theology informed African American political and economic strategies after emancipation. Specifically, Harper examines how the Christian eschatology of hope fashioned African Americans' conversations and thinking about their post-emancipative oppressive reality. Drawing on evidence gathered from African American Protestant leaders and laypersons in North Carolina during the nineteenth century, *The End of Days* sheds light on how African Americans assessed their post-emancipation experiences "as part of both human history and divine history" (p. 151). "Christian hope" gave African Americans a frame

for understanding and transcending their turmoil. In essence, *The End of Days* offers us a richly detailed exploration of the importance of African Americans' religious thought in defining and defending their freedom following emancipation.

This said, Harper also makes some problematic contentions. The claim that *The End of Days* provides historians a "new way for understanding" the intersections between African American political and religious thought during post-emancipation is an overreach. Historians including Eugene Genovese (*Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 1972), Kenneth Stampp (*The Peculiar Institution*, 1989), Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (*Righteous Discontent*, 1994), and