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Anthony Gene Carey. *Parties, Slavery, and the Union in Antebellum Georgia.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997. xxii + 339 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-1898-1.

Reviewed by Lloyd Benson (Department of History, Furman University)
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We still have much to learn about the intersection between state and national politics in antebellum America. A compelling interpretation for this period that integrates both levels remains to be written. Yet most students of antebellum politics would acknowledge the centrality of this intersection, particularly the conflicts over federal and state authority, to the era's other salient issues. It goes almost without saying that party divisions over banking, internal improvement policy, Indian removal, and slavery, (not to mention nullification) were permeated by differing outlooks about federal-state relations. The role of political parties as conduits for this debate was also critical, if widely varying among the states. The publication of several useful state level political studies in recent years has helped to clarify these mechanisms. Anthony Gene Carey's new book *Parties, Slavery, and the Union in Antebellum Georgia* is a welcome addition to the discussion.

Carey's book is a narrative of Georgia politics from the pre-nullification period to secession. He contends that antebellum Georgia's political system was defined by the struggle to reconcile national party positions with the state imperatives of a white male dominated slaveholding society. Lacking an issue-generating diversity of agricultural, industrial, or social interests, Georgia's political debates were marked by consensus over deep principles and sharp debate over means. In these debates, he suggests national rather than state issues consistently defined parties. Although Democrats had difficulties integrating national positions into the Georgia context, Carey argues persuasively that it was the state's Whigs who struggled most to convert national platforms into statewide electoral coalitions. National Whiggery's flirtation with abolitionism and broad constitutional interpretations of economic issues ultimately killed the state party. Neither Know-Nothingism nor Constitutional Unionism offered much to Georgians, leaving the state largely Democratic. Throughout the period each party split internally over whether Georgians were best served by patriotic nationalism or insistence on state rights. When the national parties diverged too far from the state's consensus, secession followed.

As was true in many places, Georgia elections in the early 1820s revolved around personalities rather than established party lines or fundamental issues. The state was loosely divided into followers of William Crawford and George Troup on one side and adherents of John Clark on the other, until the rise of Andrew Jackson and a nullification flood swept away what Carey calls an "archaic" alignment. The Democratic party emerged first, attracted by Jackson's strong unionism or his rhetoric of strict construction. In the long term these two impulses proved contradictory, but during Jackson's presidency his followers had no difficulty reconciling them. Jackson's anti-nullification and anti-banking stance, however, drove both Calhounites and economic nationalists into an uneasy coalition that became the basis of the Whig party in Georgia. While students of the era will find the general process familiar, Carey's mature prose and exhaustive research will make his interpretation one of the standard treatments of Jacksonian Georgia politics.

While Carey acknowledges that state concerns, especially the funding controversy surrounding the Centra Bank of Georgia, were not irrelevant to partisan politics, he emphasizes that national issues created the most important lines of division. Lacking other deep divisions within the state, Whigs and Democrats depended on national issues to distinguish themselves from their opponents. Even the struggles over internal improvements, legislative apportionment, taxation, incorporation and suffrage which proved so explosive in other states had little effect in Georgia. Instead, partisan leaders exchanged charges that their opponents were endangering the state by cooperating with suspect northern party brethren. In the wake of Texas and Wilmot, local issues vanished entirely. Carey points to the successful appeal to emotion and fear used by Democratic candidate Nelson Tift in the 1847 gubernatorial campaign as an especially significant indicator of this shift.

After this, he contends, "only a few odd souls ever suggested that Georgia party divisions could be or should be based on state policy concerns" (p. 131). State platforms increasingly mirrored their national counterparts and seemed increasingly irrelevant to the concerns of Georgians. The debates which followed the compromise of 1850 scrambled party lines and represented the last success of Unionism. Carey offers an astute discussion of the dilemmas facing ex-Whigs in this period. A few flirted with the national Know-Nothing movement but found it wanting. A few state Know-Nothing leaders attempted to compensate by out- doing the state rights Democrats in secessionist rhetoric, a tactic which he says radicalized all political debate. Eventually a number of former Whigs found their way into the Democratic party. The treatment which follows of how the leading Georgia personalities fought to stay above the rising tide of sectional debate in national politics is detailed and generally convincing, as is his discussion of how little influence Georgians such as Howell Cobb and Herschel Johnson exercised over the course of national debate. His subtle depiction of the frustration felt by these men as neither state voters nor national parties heeded their appeals helps explain how men of such power and status could so stridently speak the language of victimhood.

Carey stridently challenges previous interpretations of Georgia's 1860 election and its aftermath. There is little evidence, he argues, for the theory advanced by Steven Hahn, Michael P. Johnson, and William Freehling, among others, that white Georgians were deeply divided over secession. A close reading of the county resolutions and legislative debates, he says, shows widespread agreement over the soundness and equity of Georgia's domestic institutions, over the dangers of countenancing the North's failure to enforce the fugitive slave laws, and about the horrors of black citizenship and black suffrage should Lincoln's election be tolerated. In contrast to the state's once vibrant unionism and the widespread opposition to secession in the upper South, he finds few leaders in the state in open opposition to disunion as a concept. The state's cooperationists, in other words, were not simply unionists operating under a different name. The secession elections and debates were therefore contests over strategy rather than goals.

This is an elegant and perhaps even definitive book on Georgia politics. The general reader will be grateful that much of his technical argument is buried in the footnotes. Yet this strategy is not without its shortcomings. His assertions about the growing primacy of national over state issues, in particular, would have benefited from an expanded empirical foundation. The reader is often forced to take Carey at his word when he argues that legislative coalitions on state issues shifted frequently and were then supplanted by resolutions on federal affairs. Nor, despite a chapter- length survey of Georgia's social and economic conditions, does he exhaust the possibilities for linking socio-economic variables, electoral behavior, and legislative roll-call analysis.

This is particularly apparent in his discussion of secession, where he relies upon Michael P. Johnson's quantitative analyses. Because Johnson's statewide correlations between election returns and social variables are relatively low, Carey concludes that there was little connection between levels of slaveholding, for example, and electoral behavior. But once the data have been stratified by region, Johnson's correlations strengthen dramatically. Carey's own tables indicate a consistent relationship between high slaveholding percentages and immediatism. To answer this argument, Carey points to the seemingly random division among black belt counties between immediatism and cooperationism as proof that no clear-cut association existed. He further notes that even the north Georgia mountain counties were inconsistent in their opposition to immediatism. It is an argument that calls out for an analysis of variance or chi-square testing that unfortunately neither Johnson nor Carey performs.

A related problem arises from Carey's insistence early in the book that Georgia's consensus was not only race, but gender-based. "Above all," he insists in the first chapter, "white men agreed that they were superior to, and ordained to rule over, the other sex and other races" (p. 13). A true statement, no doubt, but one that he uses less effectively in his analysis than he might have done. Gender enters rarely into his narrative, even when he discusses state issues and legislative behavior. We know from other studies that Whigs and Democrats had differing visions of the family and of male authority within the household, but there is no hint of this in his treatment of the legislature in the Jacksonian era. And considering how often Georgia's secessionists talked about threats to domestic institutions, a more explicit treatment of the issue would have been especially useful in his secession chapter. Here, too, Carey is hurt by a reliance on Johnson's statistics, which omit gender related variables such as sex ratio, home manufacturing output, and fertility. Among Georgia counties this latter variable turns out to be more strongly correlated with voting for John Breckinridge, to name one factor, than was the percentage of families that were slaveholding.

Religion, too, is surprisingly marginal to Carey's treatment. That southern religious and political leaders

borrowed heavily from each other's techniques is clear. It is equally apparent that religious differences shaped antebellum electoral behavior in other states. Carey himself reports state party leaders sending out missionaries to stir up the vote, and remarks that a number of key leaders were deeply religious. There is no evidence from the book, however, that he sees religion as much of a force in party formation. It is true that county-level correlations between religion and voting are less strong than other factors, in part because census takers gathered only the most broad church information and grossly undercounted groups such as anti-mission Baptists that were otherwise of some importance politically. Yet the centrality of religious and spiritual themes to the views of secessionists, cooperationists, and Unionists seems clear from their public statements. Whether an overt discussion of how theological cleavages within Georgia affected politics would lead to a modification of his overall conclusions is another story, but it seems unlikely that they were irrelevant.

These limitations hardly negate the overall quality of this fine book. Carey gives us useful details and a valuable interpretive framework for understanding the connection between state and federal level political institutions in the antebellum era. His synthesis of a state party system struggling to find a niche in the shifting context of national party issues will be interesting to specialists. At the same time, his well-crafted narrative style and sense of drama will make the book accessible to undergraduates and general readers. Recommended for anyone with an interest in Georgia history, antebellum southern politics, or the coming of secession.

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