69. Rules of Highland Plantation (1838)

Source: Bennet H. Barrow, "Rules of Highland Plantation," from Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836–1846, as reflected in the Diary of Bennet H. Barrow, *ed. Edwin Adams David. Copyright © 1943, Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher and LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.*

Southern planters published numerous articles on how best to manage slave labor. Many insisted that treating their slaves kindly would result in

a more efficient workforce. A wealthy Louisiana slaveholder, Bennet H. Barrow considered himself a model of planter paternalism who, by his own standards, treated his slaves well. An advocate of rigorous plantation discipline, he drew up a series of strict rules, which he recommended that other owners follow. The rules illustrated that even the most well-intended owners claimed complete authority over the lives of their slaves. Inadvertently, the rules also revealed planters' fears about disobedience and resistance among their slaves.

No Negro shall leave the place at any time without my permission.... No Negro shall be allowed to marry out of the plantation.

No Negro shall be allowed to sell anything without my express permission. I have ever maintained the doctrine that my Negroes have no time whatever, that they are always liable to my call without questioning for a moment the propriety, of it. I adhere to this on the grounds of expediency and right. The very security of the plantation requires that a general and uniform control over the people of it should be exercised. Who are to protect the plantation from the intrusions of ill designed persons when everybody is abroad?... To render this part of the rule justly applicable, however, it would be necessary that such a settled arrangement should exist on the plantation to make it unnecessary for a negro to leave it—or to have a good plea for doing so. You must therefore make him as comfortable at home as possible, affording him what is essentially necessary for his happiness—you must provide for him yourself and by that means create in him a habit of perfect dependence on you. Allow it once to be understood by a Negro that he is to provide for himself, and you that moment give him an undeniable claim on you for a portion of his time to make this provision, and should you from necessity, or any other cause, encroach upon his time, disappointment and discontent are seriously felt.

If I employ a laborer to perform a certain quantum of work per day and I agree to pay him a certain amount for the performance of said work, when he has accomplished it I of course have no further claim on him for his time or services—but how different is it with a slave.... If I furnish my negro with every necessary of life, without the least care on his part—if I support him in sickness, however long it may be, and pay all his expenses, though he does nothing—if I maintain him in his old age,... am I not entitled to an exclusive right in his time?

No rule that I have stated is of more importance than that relating to Negroes marrying out of the plantation.... It creates a feeling of independence, from being, of right, out of the control of the masters for a time.

Never allow any man to talk to your Negroes, nothing more injurious.

Questions

1. Why does Barrow think that slaves have greater obligations to their owners than free laborers do to their employers?

2. Why does Barrow think it so important to prevent "any man" from speaking with his slaves?

---

70. Slavery and the Bible (1850)

Source: De Bow's Review, *vol. 9 (September 1850), pp. 281–86.*

White southerners developed an elaborate set of arguments defending slavery in the period before the Civil War. They insisted that slaves were better off than free laborers in the North and that blacks were inherently liable to lapse into "barbarism" if freed from the supervision of paternalistic whites. One pillar of proslavery thought was the idea that the institution was sanctioned by the Bible, as in this essay from the influential southern magazine *De Bow's Review*. So common had the biblical defense of slavery become by 1850 that the editor prefaced the essay with the fol-