

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**The Relationship between Christianity and Slavery: An Examination of the Defense of
Slavery within Christian Thought, Practices and Methodologies from 1619-1865.**

A Dissertation Submitted

by

Decorie Smith

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

Presented to the
Department of History in the
College of Arts and Sciences at
Liberty University
Lynchburg, Virginia

April 11, 2023

Doctoral Dissertation Committee:
Director: Dr. David Crum
Reader: Dr. Matthew Hill
Reader: Dr. Joesph Super

Abstract

Slavery in the United States was supported by individual Christians who skillfully mastered how to manipulate the Bible as justification for enslaving Africans and their descendants. Therefore, the examination of the relationship between Christianity and slavery within the United States and the greater western civilizations—explores the impact of Christian institutions on African Americans—investigates the influence of Christianity's relationship with slavery on all the descendants of enslaved African culture as the plural societies within this relationship's functions. So far, two perspectives have emerged in the study of the existence of such a connection. The first, which may be termed as "Proslavery Christians" examines the stance in which many slaveholders and prominent defenders of slavery accepted slavery in the broadest sense of the term. Their experiences and outlooks may best be seen in their commitment to reducing the value of African Americans while holding Christian morals. Therefore, their rejection of Africa and its people as significant offers justification for their desire to utilize Christianity to support their treatment of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Additionally, their willingness to justify the cruelty of the peculiar institution of slavery has defined the experiences of Africans whether enslaved or free. The second school of thought, a term just as broadly, "Antislavery Christians" sees enslaved Africans and their descendants as valuable believers in the faith that has endured one of the coldest hands of bondage and have been able to fashion themselves into a culture of believers nonetheless.

Acknowledgements

To my beloved wife who has blessed me and accepted my hand in marriage, our love has created a union that has exceeded any of my expectations. Your support in this process has led me to the realization of your unconditional love for me, which comes second only to God, thank you!!!

A special thanks goes to Dr. David Crum, your endurance and ability to reassure me that I was providing meaningful content has always been beneficial. To Dr. Matthew Hill, your ability to provide primary sources worth exploring permitted so many different avenues of research to make its way into these pages, and to Dr. Joseph Super, your desire to challenge me has allowed this exploration into the past to introduce me to other perspectives that I would not have willingly taken into consideration.

Contents

Illustrations	vi
Abbreviations	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 The Argument for slavery	62
Chapter 3 The interpretation of the Bible	105
Chapter 4 The Perception(s) of slavery	11489
Chapter 5 The Assumptions of slavery	189
Chapter 6 Conclusion	231
Bibliography	246

Illustrations

Figures

Figure 1. <i>The Benevolent Planters by Thomas Bellamy</i>	160
--	-----

Tables

Table 1. Transatlantic Slave Trade Database of 1867	150
---	-----

Chapter 1

Introduction

Locating the motive to investigate the particulars of the relationship between Christianity and slavery comes directly from curiosity that has been provoked by a collection of biased reflections throughout a lifetime of loving the Christian faith while also embracing my African heritage. When examining any of the historical contributions within the confines of history in the United States as well as the entire Atlantic World, several noteworthy events, or relationships demand attention. Within the margins of many of the notable stories that have been transformational to our current dispositions, Christianity, and slavery present two prodigious entities. These two distinct institutions have shared both time and space and have engaged in an emotional, mental, and spiritual connection within the blemished history of the United States. Therefore, when examining Christianity, especially its history and impact on the society of America, the religious system of beliefs and religious practices have produced a valuable aspect of life experiences for the descendants of enslaved Africans. Scholarship and research within this field of history have offered extensive contributions by historians and scholars alike who have championed the overall value of Christianity to America's culture.

However, the institution of Slavery has an all-encompassing involvement in the history of this country as well, however, most scholars, historians, and laypersons conclude that this institution is the nation's original sin, nonetheless, boundaries are often associated with its remembrance. Accordingly, identifying these two components of life for African Americans within the historiography of America comes with challenges and disputes. Yet, the enduring truth is that Christianity and slavery partook in a compatible relationship that has been fostered with misconceptions, assumptions, and alternate existences for those on both sides of the fence.

This assertion confronts the ancestor(s) of the slave, as he or she must come to grips with the absence of heritage, legacy, and birthrights. Whereas the ancestor(s) of slave owners must be provoked with the profound reality of benefiting from slavery and having their heritage celebrated and embraced in a manner that has been evolved into white privilege and, in many cases, white supremacy. Therefore, this investigation of the relationship between Christianity and slavery permits the evaluation of coexisting institutions that have controlled the narrative of American society at different periods.

When examining the European settlers of this country, the Christian perspective and attachments to colonization has defined their history on this continent, but the reality that they were also willing to engage in the institution of slavery is an element of the past that opposes many aspects of historical truths. It has been discovered and confirmed that the Puritan approach quickly emerged as the way of life within the New World. After the formation of the North American British colonies, the welcoming of slavery produced a justifiable means to help spread their desire for wilderness into livable settlements. As Europeans left the mother country to escape the constraints of Kings, laws, and other restrictions that they expressed impeded their ability to serve God, their refuge in the New World was soon accompanied by the arrival of captives from Africa. Therefore, the origins of this relationship can be traced to the inclination of Christians to locate and reside in a place of comfort in which the oppression of others influenced the migration of enslaved Africans to America. Some of the most important themes of Christianity have been used as a persuading method in which Christians supported slavery.

The remembered past contends that the Christian premise has been constructed mostly on overcoming oppression and bondage, yet the evolving theology of slavery was strengthened by the complicity of Christianity within the period of America slavery. Biblical reasons for slavery

range from proslavery members citing that Canaan, Ham's son, was made a slave to his brothers (Gen 9: 24-27), or that the father of faith, Abraham held slaves without God's disapproval (Gen 14 9-10), as well as defenders of slavery frequently noting that Jesus made no mention of slavery. Therefore, history has also revealed a double standard in which Christianity, the American government, and an assortment of misguided moral standards have fallen short of the glory of God within the United States' treatment of enslaved Africans and their descendants. The duality of Christianity within the existence of slavery confronts the good news of Jesus Christ as well as defines the true intentions of those who operated within these significant periods. Consequently, the relationship between Christianity and slavery presents complexities that have produced wounds that have never properly healed. One could contend that these wounds have never been properly treated.

By no means is this exploration into the dynamic of this relationship an attempt to paint Christianity as the culprit of slavery, in fact, the selection of individuals and organizations that use the Bible as a weapon is the one of the main emphasis of this study. There is a difference between Christianity (a theological system) and Christians (the followers of that system) and the two are not the same. However, the ability to identify Christianity as a system allows the abuse of this system to highlight how individual Christians failed to accurately represent the belief of this particular system of religion. The insistence of those who utilized the scripture in attempts to justify their stance on slavery with their quotes of the Bible and use of Christian terminology are distinctions that are important to note. The teachings of a system and the abuse of that system are not the same, and within this frame of thinking is where the effective intrusion of African American history remains a conflict that offers little in terms of closure within societal debates.

The relationship between Christianity and slavery has vast implications, influences, and inferences that have been confrontational aspects of the remembered past. Locating how Christianity impacted, molded, and supported slavery with a chronological methodology provides insight into the perspective of both the oppressed and the oppressors. Subsequently, the logical disposition associated with Christianity and slavery operates in a fashion that places distance between the two traditions, however, when juxtaposing their impact on African Americans within the overall history of the United States, their connection has far-reaching consequences that reveal a relationship between the two not only existed, but their pairing constructed significant models and practices of living that run deeper than we are willing to admit. The ideologies and traditions that the relationship between Christianity and slavery has produced, have yet to be overcome. As I will attempt to demonstrate, this aspect of history shows that the society in which we reside has been influenced by both institutions. This highly complicated relationship has encouraged scholarship that has essentially examined the rise of European ideologies to advance the perception of right and wrong. Therefore, the profits of slavery for better or worse also bear fruit in the utilization of Christians believers abusing the system of Christianity within the confines of slavery.

Methodology and Research Question(s)

My fascination with the relationship between Christianity and slavery began the day that I discovered Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois in middle school. His essay the *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, was my selection for a history project that I was assigned, and his words commanded my attention. Attending Wilbur Wright Multi-Language Middle School provided me the opportunity to meet and read a large collection of African American literature and stumbling into Du Bois's work perplexed a few stereotypes that I was being antagonized with.

His ability to approach the diversity of the Reconstruction era offered insight into the perspective of African Americans and he aligned the faith of enslaved Africans as a major element of their survival within the United States. Du Bois stated “The most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found El Dorado of the West. They descended in Hell: and in the third century, they arose from the dead, in the finest effort to achieve democracy for the working millions that this world had ever seen. It was a tragedy that beggared the Greek; it was upheaval humanity like the Reformation and the French Revolution.”¹

These words inspire me to investigate the affiliation that Christianity had with slavery within the history of the United States and the “new-found El Dorado of the West.” Approaching this investigation of the relationship between Christianity and slavery provides a combination of methodological approaches that is specific to identifying the era of slavery while locating Christian individuals, themes, and topics that provide validity and reliability to this critical assessment. Utilizing a chronicle approach to capture the various perspectives associated with different periods while also discovering substantial material to speak to the research has come in many formats. Such as diary studies, church histories, newspapers, autobiographies, surveys, pamphlets, and personal letters. These historical documents have been lifelines to this subject thus far and have permitted valuable insight to be collected. A social, cultural, and legal historical methodology provides avenues to exploring the logistics, control, and ideology associated with slavery and is reinforced by way of Christianity. The tactics of utilizing the Bible and the development of presenting obedience to one’s master provide significance and purpose for the research which leads to a religious methodology to be employed as well. Overall, the

¹ W.E.B. Du Bois (William Edward Burghart), *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*, 727.

intense dynamics of the overlapping political, ethnic, and denominational influences within the relationship between Christianity and slavery is the major focus of this study.

Nonetheless, the approach of answering did Christianity have a relationship with slavery in the United States demands diligent and systematic inquiries of investigation into the several perceived beliefs. On the surface this question poses several problematic approaches that some experienced researchers would esteem wouldn't warrant scholarly investigations. The approach of many methodologies associated with the study of the past consists of locating avenues in which first person opinions are restricted, limited, and constrained. Within this model of examining the practices, norms, and commonalities of the relationship between Christianity and slavery the need to define how slavery was not just an ancient practice full of immoral customs cannot be assumed but must accurately be defined. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary the definition of the word "wrong" is an injurious, unfair, or unjust act, an action or conduct inflicting harm without due provocation or just cause. It also states that the word wrong is a violation or invasion of the legal rights of another, as well as something wrong, immoral, or unethical. The dictionary continues and clarifies that the meaning of the word wrong means, especially principles, practices, or conduct contrary to justice, goodness, equity, or law. Finally, the word wrong is also defined as the state, position, or fact of being or doing wrong, such as, the state of being mistaken or incorrect or the state of being guilty.²

By this it would be logical to define any version of slavery as wrong, especially the institution of slavery within the United States. But let's approach this with the inherent reference that has structured how and why any reasonable individual would arrive at a different perspective of slavery. One of the legacies of slavery is its ability to leave a balance of division that demands

² *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh edition, 249.

individuals to associate themselves with either a Proslavery or an anti-slavery perspective, this was true during slavery and has been an enduring truth of many stakeholders within our modern society. Therefore, as we examine the totality of the relationship between Christianity and slavery the obligation of identifying that slavery was wrong permits an fundamental standard in which large parties can agree upon. Slavery in the United States was unfair to slaves, slavery was injurious with its ability to reduce the value of human life and the institution of slavery operated with immoral and unjust acts of violence and cruelty. These facts arguably seemed unfit to pair a religion near a way of living that history speaks glowingly upon.

Face with different perspectives, researching a relationship between two institutions may seem to be a reach that offers narrow opinions rather than facts. However, this logical disposition operates in a fashion that places distance between the two traditions, conversely, when juxtaposing their impact on African Americans within the history of the United States, their connection has far-reaching ramifications that reveal a relationship between the two. Taking these and many more factors into consideration, the investigation of the remembered past with the focus on discerning the relationship between Christianity and slavery provides an opportunity to align perspectives within the narrative of the purest intent of both Christianity and slavery. African American history can be seen as the context of American history that permits the emphasis of the past to be evaluated within the index of the nation's moral progress. African Americans have invested time and space within what is known as the black church to offset the ills of slavery, segregation, and oppression. Consequently, the initial question seeks to uncover in what way did the system of Christianity permit individuals that professed to be Christians to influenced slavery? Another research question: In what way did the Christianity of the American South impact slavery, and in what way did individual Christians advance the proslavery narrative

of Southern pulpits, congregations, and the dispositions of God’s people towards those enduring bondage? Lastly, a review of the defenders and supporters of slavery Christian versus the stance of the “Antislavery Christian” will serve as effective evidence of the importance of the overall research.

Extensive Historiography

You cannot discover lands already inhabited. That process is known as stealing, conquering, or colonizing. The fact that America calls what Columbus did ‘discovery’ reveals the implicit racial bias of the country—that Native Americans are not fully human.³

The relationship between Christianity and slavery has deep rooted seeds within the fabric of Americas association with the insistence of American being a melting pot. One of the biggest misconceptions is promoted within remembering the formation of Europeans utilizing the banner of Christianity as a right to take ownership of inhabited lands. The Doctrine of Discovery is a set of legal principles that governed the European colonizing powers, particularly regarding the administration of indigenous land. The doctrine emerged from a series of fifteen-century papal bulls, which are official decrees by the pope that carry the full weight of his ecclesial office, On June 18, 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued the papal bull *Dum Diversas*, which initiated the first set of documents that would compose the Doctrine of Discovery. The official decree of the pope granted permission to King Alfonso V of Portugal “to invade, search of, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to *reduce their persons to perpetual slavery* (emphasis ours), and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the

³ Mark Clares and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths the Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, 14.

kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.⁴

Dum Diversas would identify Saracens (a common term for Muslims at the time) and pagans (essentially identifying any non-Christian or ‘others’) as those who could be targeted for “perpetual slavery.” The papal bull intentionally used language that identified those outside the European Christian world and enforced the Western theological imagination of non-Europeans as ‘other.’ The Portuguese took these ecclesial statements to heart and perpetrated the slave trade from the African continent to the European and the American continents. As a Christian ruler, the king of Portugal would have power endowed from the church to take possession of “the other” as slave labor from the continent of Africa. The pagan African body was just another commodity to be taken for the pleasure and profit of the European Christian body, the one made most fully in the image of God. In January of 1454, Pope Nicholas V authored the bull *Romanus Pontifex*, also directed towards the kingdom of Portugal. Written as a logical sequel to *Dum Diversas*, *Romanus Pontifex* allowed the European Catholic nations to expand their dominion over “discovered” land.⁵

Possession of non-Christian lands would be justified along with the enslavement of native, non-Christian lands would be justified along with the enslavement of native, non-Christian “pagan” in Africa and the “New” World. The church believed that Alfonso ‘justly and lawfully has acquired and possessed, and doth possess, these islands, lands, harbors, and seas, and they do of right belong and pertain to the said King Alfonso and his successors.’ The abusive system of transcontinental slavery initiated by Portugal would be seen as just and lawful.

⁴ Mark Clares and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths the Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

Thus, by the time Columbus asked King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to pay for an expedition across the Atlantic, his view of the inhabitants that he would encounter had been influenced by Christianity that held the perspective that was based largely on their understanding of their God ordained right to name it and claim it. Also, worth noting that with the establishment of the Doctrine of Discovery, that by the time Columbus made his infamous discovery he had already been influenced by Christian thoughts and strategies that the church claimed benefited the European colonial powers. The dysfunctional assertions of this papal bull as the warped Western social imagination that saw slavery as a just and legal institution. The Doctrine of Discovery deemed as just and lawful affirming the privilege of the “pure” European Christian to determine what is right and just. Nevertheless, because the pure European body held an inherent spiritual worth, the actions of European Christians would be deemed just. King Alfonso as the true image bearer of God held the right to discover the land and to pass along the rights to the land to his children and to his people. Alfonso would operate as an agent of God, while the conquered and enslaved people would have no agency before God. The Doctrine of Discovery created the possibility of significant harm upon those outside the privileged position of the pure European body.⁶

The impact of the Doctrine of Discovery changed the way Europeans thought of the world and their place in it. A new era of interaction between Europe and the Americas had begun. Moreover, the Doctrine of Discovery and the voyages by Columbus and other explorers set in motion the development of the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Soon conflict ensued between European countries, Spain and Portugal wanted to add these new discoveries to their growing empires. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI, originally from Spain, issued a decree that

⁶ Mark Clares and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths the Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, 16-17.

drew a new boundary for Spain and Portugal. This imaginary line of demarcation divided the Atlantic Ocean and Spain could claim all land west of the line.⁷ The Doctrine of Discovery created a religious, political, and legal justification for colonization and seizure of land not inhabited by Christians that included sanctions, enforcements, authorizations, expulsions, admonishments, excommunications, denunciations, and expressions of territorial sovereignty for Christian monarchs supported by the Catholic Church.

A huge empire within America would belong to Spain based off their journeys as Spain's American colonies helped make the country very wealthy. From 1503 to 1660, Spanish fleets loaded with treasure carried 200 tons of gold and 18.600 tons of silver from the former Aztec and Inca empires to Spain. Mexico and Peru also grew food to help support Spain's growing empire. These gains came with a price for Native Americans as they suffered greatly at the hands of the Spanish. By 1650 the Spanish Empire in the Americas had grown to some 3 to 4 million people. Native Americans made up about 80 percent of the population while the rest were whites, Africans, and people of mixed racial background. Settlers who came from Spain were called *peninsulares* and usually held the highest government positions. In fact, the reward for settlers for their service to the Crown, Spain established the *encomienda system*. This gave settlers the right to tax local Native Americans or to make them work. In exchange, these settlers were supposed to protect the Native American people and convert them to Christianity. Instead, most Spanish treated Native Americans as slaves, which was a preview of the relationship between Christianity and slavery.⁸

⁷ Mark Clares and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths the Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, 16-17.

⁸ Fernando Vervantes, *Conquistadores: A New History of Spanish Discovery and Conquest*, 65-72.

The Spanish operated many plantations, large farms that many plantations, these farms that grew just one kind of crop were constructed throughout the Caribbean colonies. Huge profits permitted these owners of slaves to influence the Christianity that was practiced as it took many workers to run plantations and this lead colonist in search of laborers. Forcing thousands of Native Americans to work in the fields, these Native Americans were taken to work on haciendas, the vast Spanish estates in Central and South America, had to raise and herd livestock. Other Native Americans were forced to endure the backbreaking work of mining gold and silver. The forced labor and harsh treatment killed many native people in New Spain. Nevertheless, the role of the Catholic Church played a major role in the interactions of the Spanish with Native Americans. The Spanish king commanded priests to convert the local people to the Christian faith. Some Native Americans combined Spanish customs with their own, while others rejected Spanish ideas completely. Some European settlers in the Americas opposed the terrible treatment of Native Americans, one of the most notable individuals to do so was Priest Bartolomé de Las Casas.⁹

African Societies Around 1492

Laying eyes on the renowned city of Timbuktu, Leo Africanus was about 18 years old when he visited the city with his uncle. Leo was a Muslim born in Granada (in modern Spain) and raised in North Africa. Songhai was one of the largest kingdoms in the world at the time of their journey in 1513. The emperor of Songhai was Askia Muhammad who was rich and powerful. Describing the bustling prosperity of Timbuktu and its lively intellectual climate, Leo Africanus declared:

Here are many shops of . . . merchants, and especially such as weave linen and cotton cloth. And hither do the Barbary [North African] merchants bring cloth of Europe. . . . Here are great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, that are

⁹ Fernando Vervantes, *Conquistadores: A New History of Spanish Discovery and Conquest*, 65-72.

bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges, and hither are brought divers [*diverse*] manuscripts or written books out of Barbary, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise.¹⁰

From this region of Africa, Leo Africanus provides a glimpse of 16th-century West African life and particularly from the West and Western Central coastal areas. Within this region would come millions of people brought to the Americas as slaves. These people would have a tremendous impact on American history and culture. West Africa by the 1400s had long been connected to the wider world through trade although geographically speaking Africa was isolated from Europe and Asia. Trade had brought into the region new goods, new ideas, and new beliefs, for centuries. The Islamic religion was one of those new beliefs that took root and then in the mid-1400s, the level of interaction with the world increased with the arrival of European traders on the West African coast. The emergence of the Sahara Highway provided a network of trade that connected most of West Africa to the coastal ports of North Africa and through these ports to markets in Europe and Asia, the Timbuktu that Leo Africanus described was the hub of this network. By following ancient trade routes across the Sahara, Leo Africanus and his uncle reached Timbuktu. Cities such as Timbuktu, Gao, and Jenne became busy commercial centers as they were at the crossroads of this trading network. With control of these cities and trade routes, the empires that over them became wealthy and powerful.¹¹

Bringing the Islamic faith from North Africa, Islam, founded in Arabia in 622 by Muhammad, spread quickly across North African and the Middle East. By the 1200s Islam had become the court religion of the large empire of Mali and the rulers of Songhai, including Askia Muhammad had embraced the religion. By the time the Portuguese arrived in Africa, the two

¹⁰ Leo Africanus, Robert Brown, and John Pory *The History and Description of Africa and Notable Things Therein Contained*, 824-825.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 824-825.

knew little of each other before the 1400s. Portuguese traders making trading contracts along the West African coast began to change this situation and by the 1470s Portuguese traders had established an outpost on the West African coast near the large Akan goldfields, which was the source of much of the West African gold. The Portuguese were made up of many individuals who identified themselves as Christians and disputed the Islamic faith. As such, these early contacts between West Africans and Portuguese traders would have two consequences for West Africa and the Americas as other trading outposts soon followed. First, direct trade between the Portuguese and the coastal peoples of West Africa bypassed the old trade routes across the Sahara and pulled the coastal region into a closer relationship with Europe. Second, the Portuguese would soon begin the European trade in West African slaves.¹²

Principe and Sao Tome, two uninhabited islands off the African coast were claimed by the Portuguese using the Document of Discovery as their right to do so in the 1480s. The Portuguese established large sugar plantations on these unclaimed islands upon discovering that the soil and climate were perfect. A plantation is a farm on which a single crop, usually one that requires much human labor, is grown on a large scale. The Portuguese began importing slaves from the West African mainland to work these plantations. Initially, this new trade was an limited operation that featured a small number of West Africans purchased from village chiefs, usually captives from rival empires or villages. Nonetheless, with the success of the Portuguese slave plantations provided a model that would be reproduced on a larger scale in the Americas—including the British North American colonies. Long before the rise of Islam,

¹² David Thomas, Emmanouela Grypeou, and Mark N. Swanson, *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, Vol.5, 610-622.

Ethiopia had established a presence in western Arabia through military expeditions and through trade.¹³

The Protestant Reformation and War with Spain

European nations raced to establish empires in North America, many of them utilized their interpretation of Christianity as their justification of their actions. The second period of mediaeval Church history, or the fifth period of genral Church history, begins with the rise of Hildebrand, 1049, and ends with the elevation of Boniface VIII, to the papal dinity, 1294. The Church and the papacy ascend form the lowest state of weakness and corruption to the highest power and influence over the nations of Europe is established during this period. Therefore, it is the classical age of Latin Christianity: the age of the papal theocracy that aimed to control the German empire and the kingdoms of France, Spain, and England. Within the 1500s many significant events took place in Europe as disagreements eventually led to wars while several European nations completed for power and land overseas. In 1517 the production of the 95 these by German priest Martin Luther criticized the Roman Catholic Church. This public criticism of the church confronted the wealth and power that the Church freely abused. Nonetheless, because of criticisms like Luther's, the Protestant Reformation rapidly spread quickly from small German towns to much of Europe and coupled with the creation of the printing press around 1450, reformations provided a drive to capture a new ideal of Christianity. Protestants were reformers at their core who protested some of the Catholic Church's practices as many Protestants believed God meant for religion to be simple. This also was an era of Bibles being made more accessible, which allowed people to read and think about the Bible outside of the confines and restraints of depending on Priests to inform them on the Word of God. Catholics

¹³ David Thomas, Emmanouela Grypeou, and Mark N. Swanson, *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, Vol.5, 610-622.

and Protestants would have several conflicts within this period, which even led to a civil war in the late 1500s between the French Catholics and French Protestants. Many French Protestants eventually immigrated to the Americas in search of religious freedom.¹⁴

The Church of England or the Anglican Church was founded in 1534 by King Henry VIII. Conversely, by making himself the head of the church, the King challenged the authority of the pope. This angered Catholics and political issues soon became entangled with the struggles within the religious future of Europe and the Americas. This led to King Phillip II utilizing Spain's great wealth to lead a Catholic Reformation against the Protestant movement in the late 1500s as he hoped to drive the Protestants out of England. However, the Protestant queen Elizabeth I with the help of her sea dogs, sea dogs were the name given to English sailors who raided Spanish treasure ships created an obstacle to Phillip's plans. He was angered by English piracy when he constructed the Spanish Armada, which was a huge fleet of warships that served as a defense to the English piracy. Spain and England would go to war as the Armada had about 130 ships and some 27,000 sailors and soldiers with the aim to invade England and overthrow Queen Elizabeth and the Anglican Church. The faster, smaller, English fleet defeated the Armada army in an huge defeat, this defeat stunned the Spanish, which help to damage their economy. The gold and silver that Spain received from the Americas resulted in a period of inflation as the price of goods caused an increased in the amount of money used.¹⁵

The Presence of Europeans in North America

The early leaders in overseas explorations were the Spanish and the Portuguese. Through the 1500s they dominated the colonization of the New World. Spain and Portugal focused on

¹⁴ Philip Schoff, *History of the Christian Church* "Medieval Church History. From Gregory VII. to the Protestant Reformation A.D. 1049-1517, 8-13.

¹⁵ Steve Pincus, "Round-Table." *Britain and the world*. 2, no. 2, 330-338.

Central America, the Caribbean, and South America and they left much of North America unexplored leaving this duty to the English, French, and Dutch. Seeking to expand their own empires in America, the English, French, and Dutch nations increased in the 1500s as well as the 1600s. However, to establish an English presence in the New World, in the late 1500s England decided to set up a permanent settlement in North America. Receiving a charter, which is a document that gave the recipient permission to create a colony, Sir Walter Raleigh sent an expedition that landed in present-day Virginia and North Carolina. Raleigh would name the area Virginia, by the following year Raleigh would send another group to create a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. Fighting with Native Americans coupled with difficulties finding and growing food made life hard for the English colonists at Roanoke, and the remaining colonists returned to England after only a year.¹⁶

Slavery would officially appear in 1526 during this period, it was practiced in what became the Britain's colonies. These were the original thirteen colonies that formed the United States and the legal institution of human chattel slavery initially enslaved Native Americans. In the Spring of 1587, John White and 150 colonists resettled Roanoke and his granddaughter, Virginia Dare, was the first English colonist born in North America. White went back to England to get more supplies after a few months; however, he was not able to return for three years due to England's war with Spain. White found the colony deserted when he came back and the only clue that he found was the word *Cratoan*. White never figure out the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the colony and until this day the truth behind this event remains unknown. In 1564, the French presence in the New World saw them built their first North American settlement in the area that would become the state of Florida started by Huguenots. Driving out

¹⁶ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

the French, the Spanish soon destroyed these settlements as religious wars in France slowed further French efforts to colonize North America. The French renewed efforts to settle present-day eastern Canada when the religious conflicts ended. Giving France a claim to the region came from the efforts of Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain.¹⁷

Within the vast amount of dedication to exploration, Europeans made sure to insist that their efforts permitted them to carry Christianity into new territories. French sailor Samuel de Champlain explored North America nearly 70 years after Cartier sailed up Saint Lawrence and recorded his stance on European exploration in his journal.

Through [exploration] we gain knowledge of different countries, regions and kingdoms; through it we attract and bring into our countries all kinds of riches; through it. . . Christianity [is spread] in all parts of the earth.¹⁸

Following Cartier's old paths, Champlain over the years made many journeys along the Saint Lawrence River. Led by Native Americans guides who Champlain referred to as (savages), he would visit the Great Lakes and was able to form alliances with the Algonquin. Founding a small colony on the Saint Lawrence River in 1608 that he named Quebec, the colony would become a trading post that opened the fur-trading routes for the French throughout the region. Overall, the basis of France's claim to much of Canada is arrived from the explorations of Champlain. Naming their North American territory New France, in the late 1600s the French began spreading out from the Saint Lawrence River. French missionaries told stories about "a beautiful river, large, broad, and deep." This led to the pursue of locating the Mississippi River, in 1673 explorer Louis Jolliet and missionary Jacques Marquette set out to accomplish this feat for the French. Hernando de Soto was actually the first European to find the Mississippi River in

¹⁷ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

¹⁸ Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, 152.

1541, nevertheless, traveling down the river as far down as present-day Arkansas, Joliet and Marquette are often given credit for this discovery as if Native Americans who inhabited the region didn't guide them to their destination.¹⁹

As late as 1688 there were only about 12,000 French settlers in New France as its small population and the value of the fur trade led French settlers in New France. The French built new outposts in the 1700s which included Detroit on the Great Lakes and Saint Louis and New Orleans along the Mississippi River. Its small population and the value of the fur trade led French settlers to ally and trade with local Native American groups, because of their close trading relationships and the French treating the Native Americans with more respect than some other European settlers had done. The Algonquins creating a reasonable association with the French settlers and taught them their languages and even adopted their ways of life.²⁰

The English and French were not the only Europeans to seek claiming their portion of the Native Americans lands within the New World. The Dutch emerged as another nation willing to partake in Doctrine of Discovery and consisted of merchant fleets around the world, they came to America in search of trade. Claiming the land between the Delaware and Hudson rivers they named their region New Netherland which is now known as present-day New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Delaware. Encountering the Mahican, or Mohican, who were farmers who lived in large settlements of longhouses. The Dutch settlers and explorers pushed the Mahican eastward and in 1624 the newly formed Dutch West India Company sent about 30 families to settle in New Netherland. Manhattan Island was purchased by Peter Minuit (a Dutch man) from local Native Americans with good that today would probably total around 1,100 dollars. Minuit

¹⁹ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america..>

²⁰ Ibid.

then founded the town of New Amsterdam, which is the region that is present-day New York. The Dutch allowed members of all religions to settle in their colony to attract colonists. Minuit also helped Swedish settlers establish New Sweden along the Delaware River as well. Fort Christina was the first settlement in 1638 and was a small area. Nonetheless, its proximity threatened the Dutch as they felt that their fur trading was in jeopardy. The two sides fought a series of battles and Peter Stuyvesant, the governor of New Netherland celebrated victory over New Sweden in 1655 which prompted the name of the region being coined “Swedish Nation.” These European countries explored North American continent with a Christianity perspective that saw fit to take Native Americans lands and establish a tradition that the Doctrine of Discovery would define for future generations.²¹

Settlement of Jamestown

Asking King James I for the right to found, or establish, a settlement in 1605, a company of English merchants soon saw the King issue the first Virginia Charter in 1606 that gave the company permission to settle in a region called Virginia. The Virginia Company of London was formed through a joint stock of investors that enabled the group to share the cost and risk of establishing a colony in North America. Hoping to earn money from their investment, members of England’s growing middle class invested in the company and purchased stock. The first 105 colonist sent by the Virginia Company arrived in America on April 26, 1607. The colonist founded Jamestown the first permanent English settlement in North America on May 14th of that same year, which was about 40 miles up the James River in Virginia. Most of the colonists came looking for new opportunities in America as cities in England were crowded and jobs were hard to find, while others came hoping to be able to express their religious freedom. Most of the men

²¹ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

who came to Jamestown were inexperienced in farming and a lack of preparation cost a lot of the colonists their lives. This inexperience coupled with marshes full of disease carrying mosquitoes killed two-thirds of the original colonists. In 1608, John Smith built a fort and Jamestown took a turn for the better, he forced the settlers to work harder and to build better housing. By creating rules that rewarded harder workers with food progress was soon made. But the most effective alteration that aided in the colonist's survival was their ability to gain the assistance of the Powhatan Confederacy of Native Americans.²²

Teaching the colonist how to grow corn, the Powhatan also traded food for tools and pots to help the colonist after an agreement was reached with John Smith. These events led to the arrival of 400-600 more settlers in 1609, making Jamestown a place of great interest for both the colonists and the Powhatans. Alarmed at the growing number of settlers, the Powhatan began to kill the colonists' livestock and destroy their farms and by the following winter conditions in Jamestown had deteriorated to the point of famine. Only about 60 of the 600 new colonists survived as this period became known as the "starving time," as the colonists ate roots, rats, snakes, and even boiled shoe leather. Eventually, the surviving colonists decided to abandon the seemingly doomed settlement and sailed down the James River, however, they were met by a second English ship whose passengers convinced the fleeing colonists to turn around. Jamestown stabilized under the watchful eyes of new leaders, who did not delay to flog or even hang colonists that they discovered neglecting their duties and not working. The colony's growth also was aided by the development of a highly profitable crop: tobacco. Columbus's first return from the West Indies with tobacco, which made Europeans aware of the crop, however, John Rolfe

²² History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

experimented with the crop, crossbreeding tobacco from Brazil with a harsh strain of the weed that local Native Americans had grown for years in 1612.²³

Rolfe's experiment developed into a high-quality tobacco strain that resulted in the citizens of England clamoring for this "brown gold" and by the late 1620s colonists exported more than 1.5 million pounds of "brown gold" to England each year. The Virginia Company needed a key ingredient that was missing from the colony to grow tobacco "field laborers." The headright system was introduced in 1618 as a method of luring settlers to Jamestown. Anyone who paid for their own or another's passage to Virginia received 50 acres of land under this new system. This aided immigration to the colony as the headright system yielded huge land grants for anyone who was wealthy enough to transport large numbers of people to Virginia. The company utilized the term *plantation* for the group of people who settled the land grant, however, the term was used to refer to the land itself. Many owners of plantations imported indentured servants from England society to their labor, they were usually from the lower classes of English society. In exchange for passage to North America and food and shelter upon arrival, an indentured servant agreed to a limited term of servitude—usually four to seven years. Many former indentured servants became successful farmers or artisans. But many others found themselves without a job or a good future.²⁴

Within England, many Englishmen, weary of wars and living in overcrowded cities, listened eagerly to early reports about Virginia by the early 1600s. Playwrights, poets, and adventures, most of whom had never seen the "New World," turned those reports into fantasies of a "promised land." This tale consisted of a place of fair climate, friendly natives, rich harvests,

²³ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

²⁴ Ibid.

and bright futures. In 1605, a play produced in London described Virginia as a place where native children wore rubies and diamonds in their coats and caps, by 1606 the English poet Michael Drayton called Virginia “that delicious land” because of its rich soil and fantastic harvests. Those fantasies were translated into advertisements in 1607 and during the “starving time,” Jamestown colonists must have bitterly recalled the promises made in those advertisements.²⁵

1619

In August of 1619 on a coastal port in the English colony of Virginia, a ship arrived near Point Comfort named the *White Lion*, a Dutch merchant ship. A group of Africans in which records suggest that around 20 to 30 captives who were traded to the Virginia colonists for provisions making them the first enslaved Africans in the English colonies that will become the United States. This was just twelve years after the English settled Jamestown, one year before the Puritans landed at Plymouth, and some 157 years before English colonist decided they wanted to form their own country.²⁶ Other Africans continued to arrive in the colony in small numbers as the English colonists in North America began the systematic use of Africans as slaver labor. Tobacco served as currency in the early 1600s, which provided one reason for this economy to function as an indentured servant could be purchased for 1,000 pounds of tobacco. However, a slave might cost double or triple that amount as a decline in the indentured servant population accorded during this period. This produced an environment in which an increase in the colonies’ overall wealth led to the colonists importing Africa slaves in large numbers. Slaves endured harsh conditions compared to the life of an indentured servant as servants could

²⁵ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

²⁶ Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The 1619 Project: a New Origin Story*, 31-37.

eventually become full members of society. This aspect would become one of the major differences between the emergence of enslaved Africans as a preference over the small window of employing indentured servants.²⁷

The purchase of those twenty to thirty enslaved Africans from English pirates put into motion historical events that have shaped the foundation of American history. Those pirates had stolen future slaves from a Portuguese slave ship whose crew has forcibly taken them from what is now the country of Angola. This transaction began of slavery in the thirteen colonies and more than 12.5 million Africans who would be kidnapped from their homes and brought to chains across the Atlantic Ocean in the largest forced migration in human history until the Second World War.²⁸ The arrival of these Africans coupled with the formation of the House of Burgesses meeting in Jamestown in 1619 included two citizens, or burgesses from each of Virginia's 11 districts. The English governor had the right to veto any legislation, but the House claimed the authority to raise taxes and make laws. While the House represented a limited constituency since only white male landowners could vote continued to the development of representative government in English America. A century and a half after its founding, the House of Burgesses would supply delegates to the Continental Congress and the revolutionary body that orchestrated the break from Great Britain.²⁹

Africans soon became considered the property of others as the English colonists gradually as slavery became entrenched. After efforts to meet their labor needs with enslaved Native Americans and indentured servants failed. Plantation owners and other colonists would

²⁷ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exp;oration/exploration-of-north-america>.

²⁸ Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The 1619 Project: a New Origin Story*, 37-38.

²⁹ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exp;oration/exploration-of-north-america>.

subject hundreds of thousands of Africans to a life of intense labor and cruelty in North America during the 1600s and 1700s. The English, like their Spanish counterparts had forced Native Americans to work for them as the evolution of slavery within the early days of the colonies saw English settlers unable to successfully enslave Native Americans. Native Americans could easily escape because they had far better knowledge of the local fields and forests than did the colonists as well as the Native Americans were reluctant to learn English labor techniques. Most white colonists convinced themselves that Africans' dark skin was a sign of inferiority, and so had few reservations about subjecting them to a life of servitude. Africans were also thought better able to endure the harsh physical demands of plantation labor in hot climates, By 1690 nearly 13,000 African slaves toiled in the southern colonies. By 1750 that number had increased to almost 200,000.³⁰

Africans had been laboring as slaves for years in the West Indies before the English began the large-scale importation of African slaves to their colonies on the American mainland. During the late 1600s English planters in Jamaica and Barbados imported tens of thousands of African slaves to work their sugar plantations. In fact, the African population in Barbados was about 60,000 in 1690, which was three times the white population. Africans had become part of a transatlantic trading network described as the triangular trade during the 17th century. The triangular trade was a three-way trading process in which merchants carried rum and other goods from New England to Africa—in Africa they traded their merchandise for enslaved people, whom they transported to the West Indies and sold for sugar and molasses—these goods would then be shipped to New England to be distilled into rum. The “triangular” trade brought most of

³⁰ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

these captured African immigrants to the West Indies, Caribbean, and South America first, and then on to the North American colonies.³¹

The enslaved Africans settled in New England, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, where most of them worked as servants. New York and New Jersey had larger African slave populations because of the activity of the Dutch in these areas. Most of the African slaves, however, were settled in the southern colonies due to the agricultural economy that emerged during this period. North Carolina, Maryland, and Virginia had large enslaved African populations to work both plantations and small farms.

The Slave Trade

Within the totality of the slave trade, two distinct branches of the trade emerged, the first branch was known as the Southern trade, which was from the Congo and Angola to South America with Brazil being the primary target, this target was run largely by Dutch and the Portuguese, while the second branch was the Northern Trade, which was entailed by all the sea-going countries of northwest Europe, Great Britain emerged in the eighteenth century as the leader of both branches of the slave trade. The labor involved in the numerous demands for coercing people into working the gold and silver mines, acting as servants, or raising large crops of tobacco, coffee, rice, cotton, and above all, sugar, presented the demand for slaves. In 1515, the eastward shipment of sugar from the Spanish West Indies produced the first westward shipment of slaves from Africa. The business of growing and refining cane sugar had spread westward to the Middle East, then to Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily, and from there to the islands off the west African coast, Madeira, Cape Verde, and the Canaries; and then across the Atlantic. Having an enormous and well-documented escalating market in Europe, which produced two by-

³¹ History.com Editors, *Exploration of North America*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/exploration-of-north-america>.

products, molasses, and rum. The average West Indian plantation owners were concerned with how raising sugar was labor-intensive, and how the work was so exhausting, while the conditions were so brutal, the birth rate so low, and the mortality rate so high, that on average they would have to replace one-tenth of their workers every year. The planters had worked it out and the consensus among them was that it was “cheaper to buy than to breed” even as this may have seemed wasteful. Thus, every European power that took part in the slave trade attempted to corner at least part of the slave trade as monopolies were not a success in this arena. Monopolies meant higher prices, which most governments were too limited, and their agents were often too venal for effective enforcement, as buyers disliked them as well.³²

The human resource that became slaves within North America were transported across the Atlantic to the Americas over an estimated range of more than four hundred years, from the mid-fifteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans invested in the purchasing of Africans from African rulers. Within this new reality for enslaved Africans, merchants and middlemen transported these captives to Europe, the islands of the Atlantic Mediterranean, as well as North and South America. The most current scholarly calculations hold that approximately 12 million captive Africans were exported from the coasts of Africa and that around 10,500,000 were delivered above one of many Atlantic (mostly American) slave-trading ports. It required something on the order of thirty-five thousand voyages to transport this many people from Africa to the Americas. Four of every five immigrants to the Americas before 1820 were African captives, in comparison, there were 8.4 million African involuntary immigrants compared to 2.4 million European immigrants. “To traffick in human Creatures, may, at first sight, appear barbarous, inhuman and unnatural,” wrote Captain William Snelgrave

³² Noel Rae, *The Great Stain: Witnessing American Slavery*, 54.

in 1734, “yet the Traders herein have as much to plead in their Excuse, as can be said for other Branches of Trade, namely, the Advantage of it; and that not only in regard of the Merchants but also of the Slaves themselves.” Believing that the slave trade benefited the merchant and the slave because enslaved Africans, in Snelgrave’s view, slaves lived better lives in their new American country than they did in their old African homeland, would become a sample of the justification that proslavery supporters would use as their go-to perspective. Well, a good lie has a little truth in it, by the mid-eighteenth-century enslaved Africans were in demand, as the captain’s comment suggests. The ethics of Europeans who insisted that Christianity was their calling card partook initial formation of slavery from the fifteenth century into the eighteenth, for most Europeans who thought about the issue of the shipping of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic believed that the slave trade was no more immoral than the shipping of sugar, tobacco, and silver. The Atlantic slave trade was simply a business – “the business of kings, rich men, and prime merchants,” as Jean Barbot put it – that connected Europe, Africa, and the Americans. This business was at the core of the Atlantic slave trade system, a dynamic commercial economy that connected free labor, access to defenseless women, and unspeakable treatment of Africans through the calculated movement of enslaved Africans, goods, services, capital, and credit. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Atlantic System, more than anything else, defined and shaped the Atlantic World.³³

Slavery was a principal social institution in the ancient Mediterranean. In its most basic sense, enslavement occurs when a subject is seized, often violently, thereby falling under the absolute dominion of another and often becoming the human property of another. The slave is expected to follow every command of the master. The owner of a slave is entitled to the fruits of

³³ Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400-1900*, 326.

the slave's labor without remunerating the slave. Ancient slaves were also open to various forms of physical abuse, including sexual, manipulation, and emotional abuse. The basis of a person's social identity was whether such a person was freeborn, an ex-slave (that is, manumitted), or a slave. The persistence of slavery in late antiquity is well attested, and it is accepted that Roman slavery—the dispensation of slavery that concerns early Christianity—did not slowly decline and transform into medieval serfdom.³⁴ Therefore the legacy of slavery and its enduring relationship with Christianity has a deep-rooted connection that transcends several perspectives.

The Atlantic slave trade was not the only slave trade out of or into Africa as there were some 850,000 Christians captured by Barbary pirates and enslaved in Muslim North Africa from 1580 to 1680. In the 1692 account, *Barbarian Cruelty*, Francis Brooks declared “cruel bondage” and “hard Labour” as European men, women, and children were enslaved through the eighteenth century. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until President Jefferson launched four years of naval assaults against the Barbary ports.³⁵ Notwithstanding, historians Robert L Paquette and Mark M. Smith contend “For most of history, religion has sanctioned slaveholding. All the world's great religions on the eve of European colonization of the Americans permitted slavery, notwithstanding certain restrictions concerning who could or could not be enslaved.”³⁶

In the state of Virginia, the emergence of Africans in 1619 presented a new era of American life. Arriving in Jamestown, Virginia the first twenty Africans in the English colonies came on a Dutch frigate and were sold as indentured laborers. The term “slave” did not accompany this transaction; however, the term “servant” or “indentured laborers” was used to articulate the role of these early Africans. Eventually, they would evolve to become

³⁴ Chris L de Wet, *The Unbound God Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought* /. London :: Routledge,, 2017, 1-2.

³⁵ Ibid., 1-2.

³⁶ Robert Paquette, and Mark M. Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, 378.

commodities that would shape various aspects of North American history. Many accounts fast forward to 1660 and never clear how these servants or indentured servants were transformed into slaves therefore, the beginning of the institution of slavery has been disputed. A good lie has little truth in it, as the influential and older literature on slavery within Virginia withholds the term “slave” and the term(s) “servant” or “indentured servant” represents the recognition of kidnapped Africans. Thus, this sad truth speaks to the very nature of slavery within North America, the existence of slavery cannot be disputed, but every other aspect of chattel slavery remains confrontational. These indentured servants were unable to speak the language of this foreign land, unable to escape to their motherland, and unable to negotiate the terms of their labor, yet history insists that they first appeared as indebted laborers. Conceivably the greatest significance of the confusion concerning the identification of the term slave is caused by the change in the meaning and use of critical words such as “servant” and “slave.” The Shorter Oxford Dictionary reminds us of a fact so obvious it is indeed odd that we have failed to notice it: the typical word used by American slaveholders when referring to their blacks was servant, from the early seventeenth century until the end of the Civil War, and even later in memoirs, histories, and fiction. Nevertheless, these so-called indentured servants created a demand for more indentured servants as the population figures for the period reflects an interest in their services. For the year 1625, the white population totaled 1,227 and the black population totaled 23, or 2 percent. By 1648 the white population had risen to 15,000 and the black to 300, still 2 percent. By 1670 there were 38,000 whites but the percentage of blacks had risen to 5 percent, or 2,000.³⁷

³⁷ Robert H Abzug, and Stephen E. Maizlish, eds, *New Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America: Essays in Honor of Kenneth M. Stampp*, 1.

[In Virginia] Servants they distinguish by the Names of Slaves for Life, and Servants for a time. Slaves are the Negroes. And their Posterity following the Condition of the mother, according to the Maxim, *parts sequitur ventrem*. They are called Slaves in Respect of the Time of their Servitude because it is for Life. Servants are those which serve only for a few years, according to ... their Indenture, or the Custom of the Country ... the Male Servants and Slaves of both Sexes are imployed together ... in sowing and planting Tobacco, Corn, &c ... Female-Servants [are] ... rarely or never put to work in the Ground, if she is good for anything else ... Whereas, on the other hand, it is a common thing to work a Woman slave out of Doors.³⁸

As Mark A. Noll argues in his informative book, *A history of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, that the Virginia colony was England's first permanent settlement as Jamestown was established in 1607. He contends that historians have customarily contrasted the secular character of the founding of Virginia with the more overtly religious settlements of Puritans to the north in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. Eventually, these first Virginia settlers joined the Reverend Robert Hunt upon arrival in 1607. However, when Lord De La Warr arrived in 1610, the colony had teetered on the brink of collapse, and he issued a biblical call for sacrifice and industry. The Puritan denomination enacted laws that required attendance at Sunday services, strict stances on adultery, and prohibited excessive dress. The Christian faith of these early Puritans witnessed their attempts to convert Native Americans as the Church of England was made the colony's established church. Although the Puritan denomination became the major Christian voice within Virginia, a very different flavor to religion began to take shape as the growing of tobacco for export and an early introduction to black chattel slavery presented

³⁸ Robert Beverley, "The History and Present State of Virginia" in Greene, *Settlement to Society*, 284-86.

a different stance on Christianity for these Puritans than their neighboring fellow Puritans in New England.³⁹

The transformation and intention of those early enslaved Africans forced to labor evolved into the institution of slavery which rapidly became a major element in the Southern way of life. Slavery was a very common feature within the Northern colonies as well, as colonies such as New York, Newport, Boston, and other trading centers provided enslaved Africans. Sadly, slavery in this period wasn't contested by any of the New World Christian denominations.⁴⁰ The perspective of slavery within the Christian disposition can be traced to Roman authors. Within the writing of many Roman authors, the identification of the humanness of slaves revealed how oppression and subjugation accompanied enslaved African's exploitation. For instance, food was utilized as a bargaining chip for obedience as hunger was a norm in the lives of slaves. Companionship and intimacy also became concessions in which oppression and manipulation took place. Even if the slave's humanity was acknowledged in some cases, this fact did not accompany fewer domineering acts of power by slaveholders. Therefore, this simply meant that slaves were dominated as fungible property. The separation of enslaved family members was not supposed to occur in the process of the sale of slaves according to Constantinian law, however, the stance of slaves being considered human was converted to the distinction of property.⁴¹

Explanation of the Dissertation's Scholarly Significance

The total scope of investigations into the research of the relationship between Christianity and slavery offers layers that run deep but have not been fully penetrated, as the totality of the dynamic in which Christianity and slavery occupied remains a line in the sand within early and

³⁹ Mark A Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁴¹ Chris L De Wet, *The Unbound God Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought*, 3.

modern American history. Opinions differ on the importance of such a topic, those who never have experienced or had their families impacted by this relationship stand boldly on one side of the fence, while those who comprehend the significance of such a relationship stand on the other side of the fence exhausted from not being fully heard, understood, or even taken seriously.

Within the scholarship of African American studies historians such as Eugene Genovese, John Blassingame, Lawrence Levine, Sterling Stucky, and many others have established the fallacy in the notion that the perspective of slaves and their stance on Christianity and slavery does not exist. Genovese's study, *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974), puts the perspectives of slaves as the focal point of his study. Levine's book, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1978) offers the thought of African Americans after slavery and their reliance on their faith and their God. While Blassingame's study, *The Slave Community and Slave Testimony* (1972), expressively proves that valid sources can arrive from the slaves' perspectives.

Slavery was essentially the art of the dominion and power that slaveholders possessed over enslaved Africans. Early Christian records provide little evidence of the rejection of slavery, nevertheless, many of the household codes utilized within the early period of the institution of slavery use the New Testament of the Bible as their foundation. The presence of slaves within the Bible provided early Christians with validation of not only holding Africans in bondage but also the justification of their harsh treatment of their slaves. Obedience to God was only equal to obedience to the slave's master within the New Testament and this stance was reinforced by slaveholders of almost all Christian dominations. The New Testament consists of 27 books, 13 of which are attributed to Paul as the author. The Apostle Paul's approach to articulating the born-again believer's relationship with God often utilized a combination of metaphors and corporeal heteronomy. Within his writing, he described a relationship with God that altered the concept of

slavery, as he often constructed a theology that was distinctly Christian. The Pauline interpretation of the believer's newfound relationship with God was centered on servitude. Therefore, it can be contested that within the confines of the Bible, the language that informed the Bible's early readers who settled in the British colonies relied heavily on the use of metaphors. Metaphors provided insight into the relationship and interaction that God would have with humanity. The reoccurring theme of the Bible presents bondage as a rite of passage that slaveowners insisted on as justification for their disposition to slavery. Consequently, the Christian identity is described with these metaphors, the term slave and the interpretation of slavery within the Bible have influenced the perspective of Christianity, especially during slavery. The relationship between slaves and masters in the American South operated with these pervasive forms of speech as directives in which the Bible became a resource in which cooperation was not only reached but was routinely preached.⁴²

Within Christian households, through the centuries the utilization of the Bible progressed the institution of slavery as the Church became a resource for slaveholders to become educated in the managing of slaves. Slaves attended church gatherings in which they read scriptures, prayed, fasted, and praise God with songs. Christian festivities and domestic rituals such as slaves being baptized presented confrontational positioning for slaveholders. Initially, slaves were encouraged to be baptized, however as slaveholders were introduced to profits, their awareness of slaves potentially demanding their freedom based on their Christian stance created a dispute over this sacrament. Galatians chapter 3, verse 28 declares "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye is all one in Christ."

⁴² Anthony G Reddie, *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity: 200 Years and No Apology*, 35.

This scripture permitted slaves to occupy leadership positions but only as slaves as this position remained their overall status. Slaves were even ordained as clergy, they had to consent to be manumitted before their elevation and freedom was only from the labor of plantations. The late antique church disputed the ordination of slaves although Pius and Callixtus who both became bishops were former slaves. As Christianity progressed through the centuries, domestic slavery remained a common occurrence in Christian households and the church fathers provided detailed guidelines on how to manage and educate one's slaves.⁴³

The experience of Christianity during slavery for African Americans resides in more than just the investigations of slave folklore, slave autobiographies, slave narratives, and slaves' experiences. The particulars of Christianity and slavery have been shaped by perspectives, and the disposition of the Christian experiences of men and women of African descent during slavery cannot and should not be rendered as a forgettable chapter within the remembered past. The perspective of the relationship between Christianity and slavery is a topic that has been addressed all too well, yet the weaponization of memory has rendered the complexity of tradition to offer consciousness of sin while not allowing meaningful room for repentance. Therefore, I have endeavored to picture the relationship between Christianity and slavery as a complex dynamic that preserves the enduring faith of the slave, while also accounting for the price of all sin through the blood of Christ Jesus.

Overview of Chapters

Within chapter two, the narrative of slavery is examined and explored with how the traditional use of the Bible allowed for supporting the evils of slavery. Defending slavery produced a narrative that was used to persist slavery as an institution of love. These Christians

⁴³ Chris L De Wet, *The Unbound God Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought*, 3.

leaders put forth profound efforts contend that slavery was a way of life that was worthwhile. This conflict with morality and slavery induced Christian figureheads to not only condone slavery, but in many cases embrace slavery as their way of life. Therefore, within this chapter, the exploration of the narrative of African American history within the dynamic of Christianity and slavery takes center stage.

An examination of the slave-owning households of the antebellum South will be explored as they operated with a Christian temperament that insisted that slavery was the will of God. The utilization of the Old Testament of the Bible by slaveholders within the seventeenth century advanced profits increased slavers' territory and permitted the sinful behavior of slavery to exist while scripture was quoted. Nevertheless, one must come to terms with how the original narrative of African American history has been structured to fit into debatable fables of misfortune. The contention that African American history can be seen as the context of American history that permits the emphasis of the past to be evaluated within the index of the nation's moral progress is the standard in which this collection of information is fashioned. Therefore, the overall narrative associated with the institutions of Christianity and slavery depends on one's description of Christianity and slavery. Therefore, questioning the influence of Christianity on slavery within America requires measuring the impact, insistence, and persistence of this faith's participation in the bondage of Africans.

A measuring stick that offers an indication of the moral index of slavery can be examined from the story of African Americans who endured slavery while also embracing Christianity. Their side of the story presents a gap in scholarship that notable historians have addressed, however, this research aims to allow the account of African Americans to provide their voice a notable seat at history's table. The African Americans who have invested time within bondage

and lived to tell their story present a transparent reflective account that has been a source of meaningful scholarship. Investigating the implications and impact of how the Christianity of this country influenced slavery offers insight into the remembrance of those who professed their love for God and his son as well. The truth of these different groups of people is revealed in the way that the Christianity of the American North and South and other regions viewed slavery. How Christianity was utilized to advance the proslavery narrative within the confines of pulpits, congregations, and public perception overall reflects the patterns of the United States' history with race.

Of course, these questions have been confronted by historians such as Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois in his study, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), in which he offered the perspective of African Americans navigating within the Reconstruction period when he interviewed former slaves. In his study, *The Negro Church* (1903) he revisits the impact of slavery and how the African American church became a necessity. Historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson challenged these inquiries in his work as well, within his study, *History of the Negro Church* (1921), as well as E. Franklin Frazier's study, *The Negro Church in America*, (1964). Both studies researched the complicated history of traditional religions in Africa and America and how America embraced slaveholding. The impact of the transatlantic slave trade with the assistance of Christian denominations has been well documented, researched, and communicated, therefore, the hope is to provide clarity to the intangibles of creating a country. A country that has authored centuries of abuse that have played a vital role in the development of racial roles that are still current.

Within the genesis of the world's first crusade, raids into non-European inhibitions produced the strategies that insisted strangers to these new lands retain epistemological and political power that also help to present the formation of race. The Christian production of the

Document of Discovery demarked fundamental differences within the simple examination of skin, which became a route in which religion justified the treatment of humans whose skin complexion differed. The First Crusade was the product of discord and disunity which defined the Middle Ages and the motivation for establishing a common identity for the knighthood of Europeans was pinned firmly on the Christian faith. Piety and service coupled with spreading the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ presented themselves as notable motives to explore foreign sole. Within their adventures, European Christians and their faith influenced behavior with devoutness that consumed their morale as they violently shared the Gospel. The early Crusades transformed the direction of Christianity and introduced violence as the new standard by which the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ took place.⁴⁴

The underlying theological implications of the First Crusade and the many that followed across the world challenge the dominant approaches to the history and legacy of slavery in the United States as the British discourse concerning the Christian faith birthed and nurtured the settler's perception and philosophies of Christianity. It is often the case that the discourse about the epoch of slavery is undertaken without recourse to issues of Christian faith and the bible when looking at this phenomenon from a Christian perspective. This dominant narrative is one of White paternalism that has also provided several different perspectives. African American life within the United States has been defined by White Christianity that has displayed an imperial Christendom approach that has collided with slavery and justified its ugliness. The African American experience of struggle and relegation during the era of slavery finds its historic roots within the practice of Christianity, which has limited and impacted the full ability to attain proper self-consciousness for generations of African Americans.

⁴⁴ Peter Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East*, 1.

Nevertheless, many Americans abandoned the categorized religion of their ancestors for a more democratic God. One would believe that the immediate salvation that was provided within the Christian religion was able to prepare individuals for the proclaimed impartiality of American life, however, the exclusion of enslaved African's access to freedom reduced their physiological reality. Thus, the early confrontation that devoted Christian sects encountered with slavery was often absent of any challenges to slavery.⁴⁵ Throughout the 285 years of slavery, coupled with the 130-plus years of Civil War, Reconstruction, The Great Depression, the Jim Crow era, legalized segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, and even the current Black Lives Matters diaspora, the Christianity of America has offered different perspectives of the legacy of slavery that only provide artificial insight. Therefore, the value of the scope of the investigation by past African American historians, scholars, and others offers layers of perspectives that run deep but have not been fully penetrated, as the totality of the dynamic in which Christianity and slavery occupied remains today as a line created constructed in the sand within early and modern American history that few dares to cross.

Opinions differ on the importance of such a topic, those who never have experienced or had their families impacted by this relationship stand boldly on one side of the fence, while those who comprehend the significance of such a relationship stand on the other side of the fence exhausted from not being heard, understood, or taken seriously. Dr. Robert T. Handy, a Princeton historian contends "Over almost four centuries, an estimated ten million Africans endured the Atlantic slave trade, the scope of such a tragedy is difficult to comprehend, much less imagine."⁴⁶ Enslaved Africans have been torn away from the political, social, and cultural

⁴⁵ Robert L Paquette, Mark M Smith, "*The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*" /. Oxford :: Oxford University Press,, 2010

⁴⁶ Robert T Handy, *Reinterpretations in American Church History*, 91.

systems that had ordered their lives as they were transported to slavery and a life of servitude. Some Africans came from nonliterate traditions, and some came from traditions that were quite literate.

Most if not all Africans under the banner of slavery arrive in the New World with other religious traditions, most of them being Muslim. Several African traditions reappeared in a biblical dress once enslaved Africans came into the knowledge of the Bible. Historians suggest that the working mines, plantations, and households of the New World forced enslaved Africans to adapt to the absence of their tribal and linguistic heritage as the preservation of family or kinship ties became nonexistent. These conditions provided several undesirable conditions that made it difficult for enslaved Africans to openly maintain their beliefs and customs. The African diaspora transformed the elements and significance of African folklore, music, language, and religion, yet the deposits that Christianity invested within the perspective of slave owners and enslaved Africans produced a unique dynamic. The adoption of New World customs coupled with the influence of Christianity altered the perspective of Africans and in many cases restricted their ability to claim or attain free will within the confines of slavery.

Historians also contend that many enslaved Africans had an Arabic background which created a barrier to them embracing Christianity, coupled with the difficulty of understanding literacy for enslaved Africans produced an obstruction that also served as a barrier. The Bible itself was treated as a prized possession by enslaved Africans who were forbidden to touch, let alone read, yet many schools of history insist that slaves willfully converted to Christianity.

Thus, the historical insistence that slaves welcomed Christianity with open arms remains a complicated narrative when taking the perspectives of those who endured slavery into consideration. For instance, within the scholarship of African American studies historians such

as Eugene Genovese, John Blassingame, Lawrence Levine, Sterling Stucky, and many others, provided their contributions to this field of study and established a fallacy in the notion that the perspective of slaves and their stance on Christianity and slavery does not exist. Within these meaningful studies, these authors have confronted the assumptions and myths within the differing perspectives. For instance, Genovese's study, *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974), puts the perspectives of enslaved Africans as the focal point of his study.

His work also investigates the endurance and strength that enslaved Africans acquired from Christianity while also shedding light on enslaved African's conflict with religion. He ponders on how scholars have emphasized the influence of a dehumanizing brand of racism, and have argued over how slaveholders justified human bondage, while others have stressed the role of paternalistic rationales for slavery that were predicated on the notion of reciprocal relations between masters and slaves.⁴⁷ Levine's book, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1978) offers insight into the struggle of African Americans after slavery and their reliance on their faith and their God. Blassingame's study, *The Slave Community and Slave Testimony* (1972), expressively proves that valid sources can arrive from the enslaved Africans' perspectives. Blassingame's work also examines the impact of slavery on the culture and life of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Many historians offered insight into the interpretation of the Bible and how both the slave and slaveholder embraced the words within the Bible.

In chapter three the historical interpretation of the Bible has been a debatable subject that scholars and historians have differed on. Nonetheless, exploring the interpretation of the Bible by those who supported slavery with their view of God's word provides insight into another aspect

⁴⁷ Eugene D Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World the Slaves Made* [First edition]. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

of the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The vast amount of writing on Christianity and slavery as well as the suitable investigations into the temperaments and talents of enslaved Africans as well as the notable wrestling that has occurred within this field of study has been explored. The Apostle Paul's approach to articulating the born-again believer's relationship with God often utilized a combination of metaphors and corporeal heteronomy. Within his writing, he described a relationship with God that altered the concept of slavery, as he often constructed a theology that was distinctly Christian. The Pauline interpretation of the believer's newfound relationship with God was centered on servitude. Therefore, it can be contested that within the confines of the Bible, the language that informed the Bible's early readers relied heavily on the use of metaphors. Metaphors provided insight into the relationship and interaction that God would have with humanity. The reoccurring theme of the Bible presents bondage as a rite of passage that slaveowners insisted on as justification for their disposition to slavery. Consequently, the Christian identity is described with these metaphors, the term "slave" and the interpretation of slavery within the Bible have influenced the perspective of Christianity, especially during slavery. The relationship between slaves and masters in the American South operated with these pervasive forms of speech as directives in which the Bible became a resource in which cooperation was not only reached but was routinely preached.⁴⁸

The experience of enslavement is not limited to one response by enslaved Africans, as is the insisted many chronicles of slavery. Some Africans embraced the Bible while others rejected the Bible with bitter disdain. By the same token, the interpretation of the Bible produced submission and rebellions within enslaved African communities. Through the power of music,

⁴⁸ Anthony G Reddie, *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity: 200 Years and No Apology*, 35.

the Christianization of the enslaved African soon became an important way in which slaves who were restricted from reading the Bible made these Christian stories their own. Enslaved Africans faced with the law of the land circumscribed them to not legally being able to openly read the Bible, thus, a formation of utilizing the traditions of African folklore emerged. Within many enslaved African's autobiographies, enslaved African narratives and enslaved Africans' experiences, the language of the Bible shaped by its interpretation confronted by the psychology of oppression of the human mind provided a myriad of choices that enslaved Africans encountered.⁴⁹

To exercise any management of this phenomenon of oppression, different avenues in which slaves encountered the stories of the Bible through the art of music produced what we now call the "Negro spirituals." With the use of Biblical references and biblical images, this interpretation of the Bible spoke to the disposition of the Christian experiences of men and women of African descent during slavery cannot and should not be rendered as a forgettable chapter within the remembered past. Thus, the language of the Bible was interpreted with a vocabulary of Negro Spirituals by enslaved Africans that permitted enslaved Africans the ability to tell interpret their perspective of the Bible. This disposition differed from the intention of the slaveholder's interpretation. The slaveholder's interpretation of the Bible was very important to them and worked as a method for what they understood to be their right to own slaves as well as to own people. Their preaching of the Bible reflects their desire to manipulate slaves into believing that God's chief desire for enslaved Africans was to be obedient slaves. There has been

⁴⁹ Anthony G Reddie, *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity: 200 Years and No Apology*, 35.

a debate for quite some time about how much people from Africa brought with them and how much they lost.⁵⁰

However, it is important to realize that in America, the many religions of Africa and Africans endured slavery, but did not overcome slavery. The development of the enslaved African culture has produced investigations into their religious practices, beliefs, and customs. The development of traditions in the New World for enslaved Africans has seen its share of examinations of the styles of worship as well as the forms of rituals. The systems of belief of enslaved Africans within their arrival and endurance of slavery have been heavily documented within the scope and study of slavery, therefore, far too often Christianity within enslaved African communities has been confronted with suppositions, folklores, and unreliable perspectives. Nonetheless, many vital fundamental viewpoints that have identified the many aspects of Christianity and slavery have accounted for the meaningful scholarship that also provides vital assistance within the scope of this study.

Investigations of the life and experiences of enslaved Africans have factored into the perspectives of scholars but have been undervalued within the scope of public perception. The experience of different periods has produced different forms of defending slavery and marginalizing the accounts of those impacted the most by slavery. This double-edged sword has produced a system of withdrawal, indifference, and an unwillingness to meet in the middle of any preverbal place of agreement and locate meaningful answers to meaningful questions. Admittedly, the reality is that no experience of enslavement has been as abundantly recorded as that of African Americans in the United States, nevertheless, despite the large numbers of first-person accounts of slavery in the United States within the early nineteenth century.

⁵⁰ Anthony G Reddie, *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity: 200 Years and No Apology*, 36.

Unfortunately, the perspective of these individuals has been relegated within the grand scheme of history with few revelations to the Protestant Supremacy that dictated the everyday operations of life for both the enslaved Africans and the slave owners.

Some accounts have been universally dismissed as merely abolitionist history or skewed memories of disgruntled citizens. As the defenders of slavery and proslavery institutions insist on honoring Confederate monuments and other materials that glorify slavery in America. Over the past half-century, the slave narrative has received various incarnations which have reshaped the understanding of slavery within the United States. Yet, the contributions of Christianity within slavery remain a topic of great debate. Within the Protestant Atlantic World, the culture of slavery was a feature of the Anglican Church.

The relevance of Christianity within the seventeenth-century Protestant British colonies is confronted by the reality that the Anglican Church played a critical role in slavery. The maintenance of planter power, the planter elite, and their status as free Englishmen provided slaveholders the liberty to hold captives with little to no regard for their chattel. The historiography of slavery contains hundreds of works produced, such as pamphlet-length documents and numerous book-length texts including the most popular and most influential individual enslaved Africans' narrative texts. This material was largely produced to help the population at that time to recognize the true offensive nature of slavery as well as the indispensable humanity of those enslaved before the American Civil War. During the post-Civil War era, in which thousands of perspectives were collected through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Depression to provide truth to power, as the testimonies of those who escaped the institution of slavery were provided. Nevertheless, within the lives of

enslaved men and women in North America Christianity played a central role as Protestantism was a core feature of proslavery ideology.

Catholics and Protestants echoed that slavery coupled with Christianity provided salvation to the heathens. This perspective operated as a shield that transferred blame on such ideologies as Africans being descendants of Ham, Noah's son, this assertion can be found in the book, *Slavery, as it Relates to the Negro, or African Race*, by Josiah Priest.⁵¹ The "docile" myth that painted enslaved Africans as submissive enters into spurious conclusions arrived from Christian justifications of slavery as the insistence of enslaved Africans being "child-like" and obedient fit into the Christian narrative within the early development of the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The priest presents his disposition and cites the Bible as his primary source. He contends "In pursuit of this object we hope there needs no apology because we have found it necessary to resort to the Holy Scriptures for much important information which relates to our design, as it is well known that those parts of that book which relates to our design, as it is well known that those parts of that book which were written by Moses are the *eldest* writings of the human race now extant, and relate to the very first operations of the human race after the flood."⁵²

This has resulted in spiritual agony for the descendants of enslaved Africans who experienced both slavery and America's version of Christianity. The expansion of Protestant nations across the Atlantic saw the adoption of Iberian practices of enslavement that defined the relationship between Christianity and slavery. As this relationship has been the subject of extreme debates that have produced a right and wrong assessment of slavery, in many instances, Christianity has been characterized as an institution free of involvement within the scope of

⁵¹ Josiah Priest, *Slavery, as it Relates to the Negro, or African Race*, 45.

⁵² *Ibid.*, i.

slavery. This stance does not reflect how the Dutch, Danish, and English created laws based on their Christian interpretation of the Bible. This stance does not take into consideration how Protestant theologians fought to keep enslaved Africans from being baptized.

Locating the restrictions under which religious institutions operated and benefited firsthand from slavery. The connection with present problems bears the fruit of the residue of Christianity and slavery as the historical study of enslaved Africans within a Christian society confronts the moral stances within the United States' philosophical approaches to race, gender, political ideas, and social realities. The connection to slavery as well as its impact on today has seen advocates and adversaries of its influence, nonetheless, the relationship between Christianity and slavery offers insight into how significant race has become. White privilege is like oxygen, you don't have to even realize that you are breathing fresh air, thus, privilege consists of taking part in a lifestyle that benefits you based on the complexion of your skin and not considering how much you benefit off from it. Therefore, when researching the preaching of the early Church, the production of a spiritually advantageous disposition towards slavery permitted differentiating of the haves and the have-nots. Thus, there is no real debate between Christian theologians consistently reconciling slavery and Christianity within the Christianity of the United States. It is within this disposition that the intellectual has marginalized the ramifications in which the complex layers of slavery have operated within the foundation of the structure of this country.

The restrictions and limitations of those who were burdened with the suffocation endured the nightmare of slavery which cannot be explained away with logic, hypotheses, and analysis. To avoid the coerciveness of the debate over slavery, one must come to terms with the results of slavery within the United States. The investment in which Protestant slaveowners deposited their

Christian traditions into purchasing Africans for the sole purpose of enslavement speaks to the sizable divisions that remain visible in American society today. Christianity and slavery developed a compatible relationship that saw the Spanish, French, Dutch, Danish, and English travel to Africa with Protestant planters holding Christian identities that boasted an inclusive religion but transformed it into an exclusive religion based on ethnicity. Thus, by the time the antebellum period arrived the polemical studies of slavery cast swallowed over the antislavery arguments with proslavery arguments that utilize the manipulation of the Bible.

The 1600s set the tone for the disillusion of facts and reality and any hope of objective discourse has been labeled as either proslavery or antislavery narratives. The history of the Church has been stuck in neutral as this relationship between Christianity and slavery has been confronted with hostile disagreements that do not advance the field of study. In 1697 on the island of Barbados, an act was passed that can permit Christians who happen to own slaves the ability to utilize the Bible when creating their Laws in connection to slavery. Within the confines of this act, the word “Christian” was replaced with the word “white.” This permitted the codification of race to forever change the direction of the relationship between Christianity and slavery.⁵³ The conversion of enslaved Africans into Christians has seen many scholars and historians explore the religious practices of Africans within Africa. One such historian, John Thornton, who has specialized in pre-colonial Africa, has argued for the need to understand the religious lives of Africans before their enslavement and forced relocation to the United States. Thornton contends that the crusades and missionary trips before the transatlantic slave trade conditioned Africans for Christianity. Within the kingdom of Kongo, Thornton's work presents this nation as important evidence, sitting that the experience of great conversion of the Catholic

⁵³ *Laws of Barbados*, 203-4.

religion reveals key insight into the future of this proud race. For Thornton, the conversions of Kongos reflected the willingness of Africans themselves to embrace Catholicism.⁵⁴

Underscoring that many enslaved Africans were believing and practicing Christians before the middle passage, Thornton hints that this fact has implications for how African Christianity informed slave life.⁵⁵ Therefore, with this perspective Africans and their future generations had preexisting conditions that provide antibodies for the experience of slavery in the form of Christianity.

Presenting a formidable challenge to Thornton's assertion, James H. Sweet agrees with Thornton's position that research should begin in Africa concerning the faith of Africa Americans. Sweet asserts that most Africans, including the kingdom of Kongo, traditional religion, not Christianity informed and conditioned Africans for the peculiar institution of slavery. "The institutions that Africans created" provided "them with a prism through which to interpret and understand their condition as slaves and as freed people."⁵⁶ Although this assertion may be perceived as informative, it is hollow within the scope of investigating the relationship between slavery and Christianity. Conversely, even if one is not persuaded to interpret the historical profession as a vehicle for the recovery of some objectively rendered truth, this state of historiographical affairs is puzzling. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust, states that "historians of proslavery thought in America have arrived at a bewildering array of contradictory conclusions when assessing the affairs of slavery in a Christian society."⁵⁷ Therefore, one can submit to the

⁵⁴ Thornton, John K, (John Kelly), *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, 11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁵⁶ Sweet, James H, (James Hoke), *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*, 27.

⁵⁷ Faust, Drew Gilpin, *Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War*, 182.

reality of the complications within the study of Christianity and slavery and conclude that the surface has barely been scratched.

Within the Atlantic world, new Christian religions from European countries emerged around the mid-fifteenth century with established trade routes to Africa. Toting spices and other resources they traded products for enslaved Africans as the Portuguese settled the Atlantic islands of Madeira in 1419, the Azores in 1427, and the Cape Verde Islands in 1450. The Portuguese are credited with establishing one of, if not the first trading post along the African coast.⁵⁸ Enslaved Africans replaced the Portuguese merchant's interest in gold as the trans-Saharan slave trade emerged by the 1440s and 1450s.⁵⁹ Seeking and gaining approval from the Pope, the Portuguese traded away spices, silver, and other products for captive Africans and quickly deemed their efforts a crusade. The Brief Dum Diversas issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1452 provided King Alfonso V of Portugal free reign. This gave the King and his merchants Christian permission to invade, search out, and capture heathens of Africa in the name of the Lord.⁶⁰ This new standard would be followed by future Popes who gave way to the exploitation of Africa's greatest resource. The 1400s, 1500s, 1600s, and 1700s produced differing results of Christianity partaking in the bondage of Africans behind the façade of the crusades. Other enslaved Africans faced the cold hand of being prey. Within the corridors of slavery, the narratives of those who could tell of being abducted from Africa fostered tangible insight.

Within Chapter four, the perception of African American history within the dynamic of Christianity and slavery has several different elements that have different levels of significance. Perception or the perceptions of slaveholders and their counterparts during this period within

⁵⁸ Phillips, William D, *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, 19.

⁵⁹ Blackburn, Robin, *Making of New World Slavery*, 100-103.

⁶⁰ Maxwell, John Francis, *Slavery and the Catholic Church: The History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery*, 53.

history offers different stances that have contributed to the totality of the remembrance of slavery from a Christian lens. Within the centuries of slavery in America, the use of the Bible advanced the slaveholder's grip on slavery and transformed the institution completely. In their efforts to justify slavery, the defense of slavery gravitated to using God's word to justify the South's way of life while allies in the North supported this lifestyle. Exploring this topic in detail, chapter two serves as an engaging journey into the thought process of Proslavery Christians. By highlighting the utilization of the Bible within individuals, Leaders, and influencers of Proslavery Christians ideology, the overall investigation of the African American experience in this country has produced a great need for the exegesis of the Bible to properly address the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Nonetheless, the perception of Proslavery Christians can help answer this question, in what way did the Christianity of this country influence slavery?

Hence, while we can connect the dots with the welcoming converts from the black and white working population that the Methodists and the Baptists suddenly, we're presented with, the recognition of the impact of slavery and Christianity provided an unparalleled conflict that presented challenges to the faith. How could the preaching of salvation through a Savior who die for everybody's sin, justify the institution of slavery? Slave owners initially resisted evangelicals preaching to their bond people fearing the Christian message of spiritual equality. Nevertheless, a few felt compelled to teach their slaves about the Bible as the revival movement spread. Many have concluded that in accepting America as home, this reality required the generation of African Americans who were removed from their homeland to grow into an understanding of the oppression of this land with significant reliance on the principles of Christianity. Therefore, for their reasons, it is suggested that African Americans played a major role in their conversion. Yet, the reality of Africans who were brought to America being able to freely possess the religion of

their forefathers cannot be accurately equated, yet the resistance to the acceptance of Christianity is not a narrative that has been a popular theme.⁶¹

The presence of slavery within the United States was a byproduct of the heist of Africa in which the accusations of its people under Christian crusades becoming commodities of generational wealth will be the final chapter. The complication of the relationship between Christianity and slavery can be observed within the life of Olaudah Equiano who was an enslaved African who was able to detail his experience. Within Olaudah Equiano's book, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vass, the African, Written by Himself* (1789). Equiano describes being kidnapped from his home in Africa and taken to the new world in his narrative. Producing a picture of Africa as a kind of Edenic region being despoiled by European greed.⁶² Equiano served as an enslaved African who became a Christian, within his narrative he reflected on how the established order of life for African Americans required obedience. Christianity in the eyes of many was tailored and made for slavery as the allegiance to insisting that meekness and submissiveness were the way of the slave.

Once Africans were apprehended and escorted to the Atlantic World, their life trajectory was determined by Christians. The complexities of slavery's long history allowed these Christians to utilize their chattel in a variety of ways. Enslaved African women were confronted with abusive methods that were heavily connected to sexual exploitations. The combination of forced servitude and the introduction of colonization also became consequences of slavery for enslaved Africans. Strands of the study of Christianity and slavery hold fast to the conditions of slavery within the United States. The numbers of enslaved Africans and the importance of

⁶¹ Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph M, *The Craft of Research*, Third Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

⁶² Equiano, Olaudah, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*.

slavery increased during each of the centuries to come, and the significance that slavery produced within the economy and the social gravity shifted as Christianity assisted with the moral insistence that helped to confine enslaved Africans.

The ransoming of captives remained a preoccupation of the Christians of Europe well into the eighteenth century. The activities of Christian Europeans held enslaved Africans at ransom as the flourishing business of slavery has a structure the roles of power within America. Of course, the generalizations associated with slavery don't consider that the lives of enslaved Africans varied considerably. They lived under similar legal frameworks, but their age and gender, physical appearance, language, and religion altered due to different circumstances. This fact adds to the significance of the relationship between Christianity and slavery as the examination of conditions that enslaved Africans endured speaks to the Christianity that they experienced. The hopes and desires of enslaved Africans against a repressive system such as slavery saw their opportunities to possess power become nearly nonexistent, yet the pursuit of liberty produced stories that cannot be denied.

Adapting to new circumstances became a part of life for enslaved Africans as the Christianity that accompanied slavery meant rules that masters exercised. Within the structure of the household, masters became head of the household, as wives, children, and enslaved Africans all were dependents of the master. Enslaved Africans were permanently barred from becoming a member of the family in which they served, nor could they gain access to citizenship. Within this reality, the challenges that enslaved Africans faced provided experiences that could be viewed as debilitating, yet they quickly adapted to their new reality. The host of new challenges that enslaved Africans faced, saw language as the initial barrier that they encountered. Enslaved Africans were forced to comprehend the master's native tongue, thus, the importance and

hardship that these men and women faced led to fundamental hardships. Language influenced the direction in which enslaved Africans could travel. Unable to retain their native language, enslaved Africans began to lose their identities, their names were replaced with European names, and their tribal customs were replaced with slaves' cabins coupled with the removal of tropical weather. Separated from husbands, wives, children, fathers, mothers, and countless other aspects of life remains an aspect that has been overlooked. Freedom and liberty could only be gained for Africans and those of African descent by a master in front of five witnesses or before a judge, sadly, their liberty could only be attained by a will or written instrument or testament.

The Assumption(s) of Christian Thought

Chapter five focus explores the assumptions that Christianity defended slaves and critiqued the actions of slaveholders and Proslavery Christians. This assumption has led to a revisionist account of Christianity within the United States, as well as providing theories that have birthed a pattern of presumptuous. The delivery of these approaches has covered, investigated, and explained away the complications of slavery existing in a country built on the percepts of a Christian God. Hidden under the rug of shame, denial, and disgrace, the legacy of the relationship between Christianity and slavery demands accurate assessments of this bond between these two institutions. Another historical assumption has come in the belief that slaves easily converted to Christianity, especially during the Second Great Awakening. The fact that slaves were forbidden to read and write or the reality of slaves receiving their introduction to Christianity from their oppressors tends to be overlooked. The evidence of different religions predating their association with Africans and those enslaved are disregarded as well. Even the factual observation of the rejection of Christianity by slaves is perceived as an infrequent occasion. Did slaves fully embrace Christianity, and in what way did Christianity perpetuate

slavery are the driving examination within this portion of this study, the degree to which cooperation was willfully expressed or forcefully directed are difficult statistics to locate and present as evidence to the jury, however, when considering the totality of the perspective of slavery from those who were oppressed. The inability to offer a singular explanation sees the analysis of these assumptions as logical inquiries into the history of the relationship between slavery and America's Christianity.

Reverend Peter Fontaine asserts, "if enslaving our fellow creatures be a practice agreeable to Christianity, it is answered in a great measure in many treatises at home, to which I refer you. I shall only mention something of our present state here. Like Adam, we are all apt to shift off the blame from ourselves and lay it upon others, how justly in our case you may judge. The Negroes are enslaved by the Negroes themselves before they are purchased by the masters of the ships who bring them here. It is, to be sure, at our choice whether we buy them or not, so this then is our crime, folly, or whatever you will please to call it."⁶³

Within the examination of Christianity and slavery, for most of its history of the world, Christianity has sanctioned slaveholding within the confines of the European colonization of America. Consequently, Slavery and Christianity lead its researchers down roads that are one-way streets with difficult surfaces that have been abandoned, deserted, and left without the proper maintenance that requires upkeep. With the advances in every aspect of our lives, one would think that such a significant boulevard would demand attention due to such a historical treasure. Yet the value of this area of our preverbal town causes far too much fear, concern, and debate. The truth revealed within this area of history has been restricted, while rumors, fables, and misrepresentations of the past have prevailed in keeping its riches not readily assessable.

⁶³ Education in the United States— *A Documentary History, Volume I*, edited by Sol Cohen, Random House, Inc., 1974.

Rather than the utilization of taxes and policies to provide needed funds in preserving such a unique landmark, we have constructed High-rise buildings, with fancy clubs and perfect views to allow our site in this area of history to be regulated by a rich Christian heritage absent of shame. Unable to properly access the value of this relationship between slavery and Christianity. This alternate representation of history allows our country to overlook the contributions of such a pairing toward the totality of our history.

Ministers from a variety of modern Christian denominations pointed to scriptural passages in which slaveholders were enjoined to wield their power over their property. In a manner that underscored the entire society's fealty to God, passages of scripture in which slaveholders utilized as directions so that on one hand, slaves were encouraged to serve their master with no complaints, which permitted slaveholders the ability to treat their bondservants as non-human. While on the other hand, the Bible served as a potentially powerful limiting factor upon which slaveholders use the justification of their position as earthy masters to legitimate their authority of maximizing control over slave's entire life. These proslavery scriptural implications reveal the insight of a population and the ministers who eagerly sought to influence colonial slaveholding society.

Orlando Patterson, a sociologist, has argued that an awareness of the constricting nature of the bondservant's identity paradoxically fostered the articulation of a social ideal of freedom over the millennia, then there were ideological ramifications flowing from the institution of human bondage that might even have contradicted the slaveholdings elite's obvious and stated desire to effectively deny all freedom to the enslaved population.⁶⁴ G.W.F. Hegel contends that during the very era when slavery in the United States was reaching new levels of economic and

⁶⁴ Patterson, Orlando, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York, 1991).

political significance the level of identity formation itself was constructed. This formation of self-consciousness concerning the white population for African Americans produced the dynamics of the master-slave relationship. Thus, the creation of odd dependencies on the part of the master while carving out for the slave-produced unanticipated power.⁶⁵ Therefore, when analyzing slavery, the point here is that the scholar cannot avoid a host of questions concerning the biggest historical categories imaginable in the formation of the modern world. Therefore, when properly parsing the meanings and repercussions of proslavery thought in America scholars have been wrestling with its impact on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Already surfacing at the very moment when Columbus first set eyes on the Caribbean landscape, Columbus possesses a rationale in favor of building a New World economy on the backs of enslaved laborers. He began to speculate about the suitability of the native population for enslavement before his expedition had hardly stepped foot on land. One can discern some of the features that would come to define America's efforts to justify slavery over the next four centuries, even at this early moment of proslavery reasoning. The fact that Columbus perceived quasi-racial differences between Europeans and Americans with the implication that the native population was by nature suitable for slavery would be a reoccurring theme that fellow Christians would gravitate to.⁶⁶ This meant that the American colonies that evolved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were designed, in concrete historical terms, notwithstanding some very different religious and political leanings, to establish effective mechanisms for social control. This control could be leveraged into economic development that would enrich colonial proprietors and the countries from which they hailed.

⁶⁵ Hegel, G.W.F, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), 11-119.

⁶⁶ Blackburn, Roblin, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London, 1997).

Therefore, scholars must come to terms with the reality that slavery's role in this colonial world was significant from the system's inception. The waning usefulness of the native population in the New World to the European invaders after a brutal century of grotesque exploitation and extermination. These artifacts of this colonial system almost seamlessly adapted. Seeking an alternative, their new supply targeted the kidnapping of countless Africans. The men who aggressively expropriated swathes of territory thousands of miles from their places of origin did not hesitate to expropriate the labor power of men, women, and children whom they frequently reduced to the level of chattel. The few colonial settings where enslaved labor played a secondary role to indentured or more independent forms of laborers exceptions prove an almost-axiomatic principle of colonial government. In this sense, the story of the European colonization of America was built on a proslavery plot. Their proslavery logic surfaced when the contingencies of early colonial history required would-be imperialists to review policy options. It went unspoken more often and one must hasten to add that this was not because of any embarrassment or squeamishness. The institution of slavery for all the novel ways it presented in which it developed in the modern New World setting did not violate any of the deeply Christian principles by which the European nations dealt with, which in turn permitted a questionless environment of forced servitude and social control.⁶⁷

Conclusion

The acceptance of Christianity within a period that held some many differences within those with European descent and African descent seems bewildering. While the slave system itself provided the chief barrier to a Christianity that could produce liberty and justice for all.

⁶⁷ Dockes, Pierre, *Medieval Slavery and Liberation*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1882).

The appropriate examination of the affiliation between Christianity and slavery requires a flexible approach to access fully, the remembered past with the proper level of objectivity. The limitations of indenture servitude birth a system of involuntary labor that rapidly became a major element in the Southern way of life. Offering Christianity to enslaved Africans lack any significance to the English settlers within the British Colonies as well as the independent nation of the United States. Their intention for those who survived the ills of the middle passage didn't fit Christianity into their equation, Christianity seemed to negate their purpose altogether. One of the strategies used by those who were concerned about offering Christianity to slaves sought to exploit the Bible as a tool to reinforce the obligations of "servants," i.e. slaves.

Exploring the religious implications of social, economic, and political inequality within the relationship between Christianity and slavery within the twentieth century involves identifying the power of faith. The prominent themes of slavery were surrounded by Christian participation that combined constraints and strong sanctions while maintaining Christian principles. Which makes it difficult to assess the relationship from perspectives of objectivity. On the one hand, you have the growth of an "Antislavery Christian" disposition. The widespread growth of the Abolishment movement was able to reach those who stood on the fence with the issue of slavery, however, the South adopted a theology that insisted on the Bible sanctioning slavery. On the other, the practice of using the Bible to defend slavery became a calling card by many Southern clergyman. Beneath the surface, sermons, pamphlets, and even Church histories display an eagerness by preachers and churchgoers to support this method. Christians who supported slavery welcomed this method of defending their way of living with almost no serious analysis for correct Christian behavior. Translating the Bible into forms of engagement that looked like versions of their own ideas, filled with their own biases and motives. Rather than

provide the meaning of the Bible, the intention of defenders of slavery constructed a understanding of the narrative of the Bible within the concept of the twentieth century to rewrite history.

When considering the plight of enslaved Africans and their descendants in the United States surviving these deeply rooted systems that were designed to keep them in bondage and suggest that they were inferior, the perception, interpretation, and assumptions within the relationship of Christianity and slavery, as well as the propaganda and rhetoric that speaks to the history of both this nation and its relationship with race. Africans were involuntarily casted into a role in which they resided in a Christian nation where they were enslaved, segregated, lynched, raped, and burned by Christians. Comprehending how and why both Proslavery Christians and enslaved Africans attained historical perspective, while telling the complete story of history must be disclosed through different lens and voices. Thus, when exploring the different avenues of the past, a level of impartiality speaks in the place of attacks as grace rest within the place of judgement. The power of religion defined the 19th and 20th century of America, the relationship between these two institutions reveals how the opposition of providing liberty was encountered by laws, while justice was submissive to power. The United States has transformed the definition of religion, altered the reality of government, and enhanced the meaning of manipulation. For there are no winners if growth doesn't occur from the study of history, the internal conflict of these systems within the totality of a country have constructed foundational pieces that built the residence of America—creating a basement that has been neglected for centuries drives down the value and potential of such a home.

Chapter 2 Abstract

Arguments that supported slavery discovered an tool, the Bible was a practical source of justification that fueled the commitment to the institution of slavery. The term “proslavery” refers to individuals who stood in support for slavery, therefore, when identifying these individuals as “Proslavery Christians,” it is with the understanding that they openly supported, argued, and embraced a narrative of slavery that provided an intricate and persistent tradition about the inferiority of enslaved Africans and their descendants. This narrative was fashioned to legitimate, perpetuate, and defend slavery and its origin began in the 16th century. As Africans were kidnapped, enslaved, and shipped across the Atlantic to the Americans under horrific conditions, in which nearly two million of those poor souls meet their death at sea, the use of the pen by supports of slavery orchestrated literature performances that spoke to a mythology disposition on the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The enslavement of African Americans in the United States has created wealth, opportunity, and prosperity for millions of Americans over an enduring period that is close to two centuries. The agony of slavery can still be observed today with the collection of systems that safeguard thoughts of inferiority of African Americans. Thus, seeking to answer the question, how did an alternative narrative emerge in many Southern communities that celebrated the enslavement era? Chapter two explores the argument and overall narrative and its their impact on the remembrance of the relationship between Christianity and slavery in the United States.

Chapter 2

The Argument for slavery

The explanation of negative or basis argument or narratives provides another amalgamating theme that explores the principal methodology of the defenses of slavery. The compositions, informal essays, and extended literature constructed on behalf of pro-slavery Christians presented an alternative narrative that many Southern communities still celebrate. The honor associated with the enslavement era provides evidence of how the narrative of slavery has been influenced. Therefore, narratives in support of slavery operated at a rate in which the enslavement principal proponents and defenders of slavery refuse to acknowledge or address the problems created by the legacy of slavery within the United States. The prominent role of Christians who argued for slavery aided in the abiding account of Africans and their descendants having to defend their humanity. This burden of proof has escaped the current trend of unbiased consciousness awareness or the politically correct race theory that has captured the imagination of our society as of late. Regionally, historically, and spiritually, the views on slavery have varied within Christian communities as slavery within various forms has been a part of the social environment for much of the eighteen centuries that slavery has spanned. Persisting in different forms and with regional differences well into the invasion and colonization of North America. Passages in the Bible were used by both Christians who supported slavery and Antislavery Christians to support their respective views as the eighteenth and nineteenth-century arguments and narratives that rejected or accepted enslaved Africans who converted to Christianity as spiritual brothers.

The argument for slavery in the hands of Christian defenders of slavery has reinforced negative connections to the enslaved, while Antislavery Christians produced narratives that

confronted slavery arguments, the objective of the Old South demonstrated an intent to offer suggestions of inferiority in hopes of extending the southern slave society. Within the exploration of these Christians' efforts to defend slavery, the slave's experience is often omitted within the margins of their analysis of slavery. The comparative history of the slave systems of the South and its defenders reflects the nature, extent, and depth of a perspective of paternalism. The antagonism between slave and bourgeois society confronted the narrative that the Old South could not construct a genuine defense against slavery outside of religion. Many historians view the Old South as a slave society embedded in an antithetical capitalist world market that held it hostage. However, to fully study the literature of Southern defenders of slavery one must come to terms with the sensible reality that the south was not limited to being simply a slave society but embrace that the south was allowed to be a society that enslaved defenseless Africans.

These individuals intended to emphasize or argue that the slave labor system embraced organic social relations of a kind and gentle nature. Slavery in the Old South rose to a power that transformed it into its social class which laid the foundations for a revisionist and false account of the nature of holding Africans and their seeds in bondage for generations. This social order of the Old South produced a special nature in a southern slave society that yielded an alternate reality for those who benefited from the institution of slavery. The dominance of slaveholding influenced the social order of slaves and slaveholders and in turn, afforded literature that gave slavery a romantic undertone. The plantation world was presented as a world that avoided conflicts, struggle, and reality. The idealism and romantic obscurantism in the hands of defenders of slavery provided a prevalent scholarship of slavery that has impacted the overall interpretation of the Old South. Many of these narratives attempt to treat the slaveholder as a monolith with a single mind, ideology, and politics that qualify them as men and women of valor

within their lifetime. The tendency to subject terror to enslaved Africans within slavery as an acceptable way of life with the weapon of the pen has been superior to the sword as the cuts of the literature of the Old South have left lasting wounds.

The Argument from 1663-1706

Charles F. Irons an Assistant Professor of History at Elon University authored a book in 2008 titled, “*The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*,” within this book, he explores how black and white evangelicals frequently prayed, sang, and worshipped together in the state of Virginia. Irons contends, “In late 1667, Virginia’s General Assembly, which created the laws governing the establishment of religion, passed a statute denying that baptism implied manumission and closing such a route to freedom. Black Christians, even at this early stage, were already forcing whites to explain how Christianity and slavery were compatible.”¹ He confronts the methodology of the Virginia General Assembly, by stating, “Within the text of the statute, the burgesses offered a novel explanation for why they accepted the enslavement of their fellow Christians. It was important for converted Africans to remain in slavery, they argued.”² Which highlights how Christians who helded on to slavery as a way of living, utilized the law of the land to present a narrative or argument that afforded an excusable stance toward holding enslaved Africans and future African Americans in bondage.

Slavery in the Northern states compared to the Southern states began to diverge due to the consideration of slavery from a Christian perspective. Southern states spoke profoundly of the Governments influence on their right to seek slavery within their states. Many Southern states demanded an increase in slave labor.

¹ Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*, 28.

² Ibid., 28.

it cannot be denied that the Southern States—more especially those in which are grown the great staples of cotton, sugar, and rice—demand a greater number of negro laborers than can now possibly be acquired by natural increase or from those home sources which have heretofore yielded but a sparse supply, and this demand is rapidly increasing to such an extent that, unless it shall be supplied from other sources, the price of slaves will soon become so exorbitant, and the need for their labor so urgent, that their accumulation and concentration in the hands of a few will be the unavoidable consequence, and thereby a monopoly of slave labor will be established, whether designedly or not is a matter of no difference, eminently dangerous to the institution itself.³

In order to comprehend the arrival of the decision to overlook slavery within the Constitution while expressing many Christian perspectives one can review the New England way of life and their stance on Christianity and slavery. An individual such as Cotton Mather, who was born on February 12, 1663, in Boston, Massachusetts Bay Colony U.S., departed at the age of 65, a day after his birthday on February 13, 1728, in Boston. He was a renowned Congregational minister and author who supported the old order of the ruling clergy and became popular in leading the New England Puritans. Cotton Mather resided in Boston for the entirety of his existence and was the son of Increase Mather and the grandson of John Cotton and Richard Mather. He was accepted into Harvard at the tender age of twelve, and at the age of eighteen, he earned his M.A. degree as his father was the president of the college at the time.⁴ His grandfather John Cotton, and Richard Mather both had operated as Pastors and together established Harvard University with Cambridge as their blueprint. The curriculum of Harvard closely submitted itself to the methods of Cambridge, which embraced the ancient Greek and Latin literature, there was also a tendency of both institutions to romanticize the philosophy of Aristotle. With a steady diet of Aristotle's work, Puritans soon embraced the ideology of human hierarchy.

³ DeBow's review, *Agricultural, commercial, industrial progress and resources*. New Orleans [etc]; J.D.B. DeBow *The South Demands More Negro Labor-Address to the People of Louisiana* [Volume 25, Issue: 5, Nov 1858; pp. 492-493. Making of America Journal Articles: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acg1336.1-25.005/499>

⁴ [Newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cotton_Mather](http://newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cotton_Mather)

Living from 384 to 322 BCE, Aristotle championed a philosophy that esteemed the Greeks as superior to all non-Greeks. Within this way of thinking Puritans quickly embraced the possibility of some humans being superior to others, as Aristotle's philosophy presented the case for a climate theory in which he believed that ancient Greeks were better than all non-Greeks due to the theory that cold climates produced intellectually, physically, and morally inferior people. This set of unstable and shifting prejudices against other races built a philosophy that fueled the Greek civilization's desire to affirm their worth. Natural slavery was a byproduct of the Greek's perspective on themselves truly believing that they were superior to those that they conquered.⁵ Over time the successes of Cotton Mather provided him with influence, stature, and authority as he followed in the legacy of his grandfathers and his father in more than just his professional zeal of becoming a theologian. Another influencer of Mather could have been the publication of George Fox's *Gospel Family Order*. George Fox was born in 1624 and died in 1691, he grew up in Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire in turbulent times and became a Quaker.⁶ He produced a short discourse concerning the ordering of families of whites, blacks, and Indians. Fox believed that slaves should have access to Christian knowledge.⁷

By 1700 the number of Africans living in New England was roughly 1,000, which was out of a total population of 90,000. They were concentrated in Boston and the coastal towns most of them lived in Massachusetts. Puritans enthusiastically partook in the trading of enslaved Africans, with an importation system that saw them trade resources with West Indies, and they even sold Native American prisoners overseas. Cotton Mather's congregation at the Second (or

⁵ Francisco Benthencourt, "From Greek to Muslim Perceptions." In *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, 13-18.

⁶ quakerintheworld.org/quakers-in0action/12/George-Fox

⁷ George Fox, 1701, *Gospel Family-Order: Being a Short Discourse [Sic] Concerning the Ordering of Families Both of Whites Blacks and Indians.: [Twelve Lines of Scripture Texts]*.

North) Church included both merchants of slavery and individuals of African descent as his household enlisted several slaves. In 1706 he is credited with penning a pamphlet entitled, *The Negro Christianized*.⁸ The pamphlet appears without his name, but his authorship of this work is generally accepted. Within the confines of the pamphlet, Mather calls on those who held Africans in bondage to educate them in the Christian religion. Including two catechisms and other instructional material that provides benefits for treating slaves justly and kindly. Mather's style provides a blueprint for future that Proslavery Christians desired, the ability to present slavery as a narrative that dehumanized the slave while presenting slaveholders as Christian stewards doing the work of faithful servants became an continual practice.⁸

Within the pamphlet, Rev Mather contends, "It is come to pass by the Providence of God, without which there comes nothing to pass, that Poor Negroes are cast under your Government and Protection."⁹ Mather was now New England's leading Puritan theologian and was the owner of several enslaved Africans. For Mather, ownership of slaves was a concrete expression of God's will as he considered slavery to be God's providence as his philosophy from Aristotle was met with the evolution of a version of slavery that held on to fundamental presuppositions. Christian supporters of slavery would embrace this type of Christian slavery in which Rev Mather insisted that enslaved Africans were ruthless creatures who didn't have a path to heaven without slavery as an avenue. Within his argument he insisted, "Whether, by your Means, the most *Brutish* of Creatures upon the Earth may not come to be disposed"¹⁰ and described enslaved Africans as "Wretched *Negroes*, to be the Offspring of *Chain*."¹¹ Within this suggestion of a

⁸ Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized. An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (1706), 1.

⁹ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1-2.

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

great undertaken on behalf of slaveholders, Mather asserts that white masters must oversee the conversion of enslaved Africans to Christianity while also portraying slaves as inferior. This narrative of inferiority operated as a testimony for those Christians who were set on maintaining the system of slavery, as the soul of enslaved Africans being directed to God was more important than permitting their worldly existence opportunities for liberation. Rev. Mather spoke of the danger of white slave masters refusing to lead their slaves to salvation and to rescue them from “a dark State of Ignorance and Wickedness” while simultaneously stating that “Let us make a Trial, Whether they that have been Scorched and Blacken’d by the Sun of *Africa*, may not come to have their Minds Healed nu the more Benign *Beams* of the *Sun of Righteousness*.”¹²

Rev. Mather utilized a strategy that future Christians who incorporated slavery would embrace, he use passages from the Bible such as Ephesians 5:9, Colossians 4:1, Galatians 6:10, 1 Timothy 5:8, Genesis 18:19, and Jeremiah 2:34 to support his rationale. However, Mather also united slavery and Christianity by composing a narrative that dehumanized enslaved Africans while insisting that slaveholders could provide a reasonable service. His work also functioned as a pillar of relief, as he reassured slave masters that conversation to Christianity was not a threat to enslaved Africans being classified as free. The picture which Mather crafted portrayed enslaved Africans as the villain within a story in which they were held in bondage, this methodology of attacking the victim was American as American pie, birth out of a need to justify slavery while being born again. Mather’s chic in this work focuses on his ability to present a candid approach to his readers, he quotes Chrysostom, Cato, and Acosta and presents several moments in which he expresses an emotional interest in his subject, however, this self-serving

¹² Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized. An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (1706), 2.

approach provided pro-slavery Christians with a resource that they would employ well into future generations.

Mather provides several moments of clarity into his lack of respect for slave masters who treated their slaves harshly, yet his inability to identify the tragedy of being a partaker in the slave culture escapes his moral disposition. Mather believed that enslaved Africans' souls required careful attention while their earthly lives deserved no avenues to freedom. His life works, and legacy speaks to the misconception that slavery was a creation of the Southern states and reveals the totality of the institution's design of providing a level of privilege that has endured. On page nine of his pamphlet, Mather states, “Minds to have *Christianity Propagated*, never can justify themselves,”¹³ which provides a fitting assessment of his contributions to the construction of negative narratives within the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Mather closes his work with a passage from James 5:20, within this verse the conversation of a Sinner from the Error of his way will be rewarded with the knowledge of knowing a Soul was saved, the irony of an individual who held people in bondage seeking the deliverance of souls remains an exhausting affair.

The relationship between Christianity and slavery is a story that confronts the contemporary beliefs and values that most Christians hold near and dear to their heart. The disturbing truth is often marginalized in hopes that the pain and anger of slavery would finally be a decent memory. The narrative of enslaved Africans being lazy, while their slaveholders sat and watched them work remains one of the greatest literary devices ever used to this date. Imagine laboring for free and being characterized as docile, or even the thought of birthing a child for a man that held you in bondage. Yet, this reality was not expressed, explained, or even explored by

¹³ Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized. An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (1706), 9.

the authors of narratives that sought to justify the several layers of exploitation within the institution of slavery. The lack of interest in telling the full story of Christianity's involvement in slavery has been an alarming ingredient within the jumbo of the history of the United States. The difficult process of learning from the past to inform the present, while protecting the future requires efforts of grappling with the truth of the past more vital.

The narrative of Black inferiority insured that slavery survived the evolution of the truth that Christianity's core values provide. The credence provided by the theories of pro-slavery Christians restricts the demand of the using appropriate levels of scholarly discipline within the field of history, the countless voices that worked to conceal the relationship between Christianity and slavery have missed an opportunity of a lifetime, the opportunity to come face-to-face with the truth. Christians who preferred slavery in many cases thought it was their Christian duty to introduce slaves to Christianity, this was not unusual, however, the problematic narratives that arose within this period represented a blight on the pietism that was at the heart of the quest for religious freedom, this factor characterized the Pilgrim and Puritan groups that founded America. The only equation that leads to the United States truly being untied comes from an honest examination of the perspectives of all parties within being respected as the formation of the United States causes for different assessments to meet and co-exist with one another.

Arguments of 1770

George Whitefield, an evangelist who many historians credited as the first celebrity of the pulpit, followed in the footsteps of Rev Cotton Mather in constructing a Christian narrative that justified slavery. Whitefield author, "*A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina.*" Which provided pro-slavery Christians with a response to slavery that was favorable. As one of the founders of Methodism and a major figure in the transatlantic religious

revivals of the eighteenth century, Whitefield was born on December 27 {December 16, Old Style], 1714, in Gloucester, Gloucestershire, England. He died on September 30, 1770, in Newburyport, Massachusetts.¹⁴ Within his work, like Mather, Whitefield criticized the ideology of slave owners for keeping their slaves “ignorant of Christianity”, unlike Mather, Whitefield criticized the philosophy of Protestant Supremacy. Whitefield was a major contributor to the “Great Awakening” and was involved in the University of Pennsylvania building on 4th and Arch Street. Upon his death in 1770, Whitefield bequeathed 4,000 acres of land in Georgia and 50 slaves to the Countess of Huntingdon.¹⁵

Released in the Pennsylvania Gazette on April 17, 1740, as Numb. 592, Whitefield argues against the notion that slaves would request their freedom upon conversion, stating, “I was sensibly touched with a Fellow-feeling of the Miseries of the poor Negroes. Could I have preached more frequently amongst you, I should have delivered my Thoughts in my publick Discourses.”¹⁶ Whitefield persists with the contestation of the treatment of slaves and their refusals to educate them in the Christian education of Christ. Whitefield presents an argument that would see slaveholders having an easier relationship with their slaves if they were willing to provide the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He appeals to their faith stating, “I must inform you, in the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ, that I think God has a Quarrel with you for your Abuse of and Cruelty to the poor Negroes.”¹⁷ His disposition suggests that slaves would be faithful once converted and that Christianity would allow these slaveholders to forgo the abuses that he

¹⁴ Arnold A Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century*, 9.

¹⁵ pennandslaeryproject.org/exhibits/show/campus/earlycampus/georhewwhitefield#:~:text=Upon%20his%20death%20in%20...

¹⁶ George Whitefield, 1714-1770. and Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790, printer. , “A Letter form the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina,” *John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, 471.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 471.

witnessed. This methodology of presenting a narrative that ushered in a sympathetic approach to slavery was a method birthed out of missionaries' encounters with the darkness of slavery.

Several themes that the disease of narrative evoked can be explored within his work. The loyalty of slaves once Christianity became a part of the story was the leading theme while providing slaves with access to a philosophy of obedience equals heaven.

Within this theme, slaveholders position themselves as gatekeepers to eternal life, within the Atlantic world they presented slavery as an act of missionary affairs. Their contact with enslave Africans was their Godly service rather than their demonic aspirations for dominance. The narrative of Whitefield and other Christians who opposed ending slavery provided a broader defense of Christian slavery as he argues, “my Blood has frequently almost run cold within me, to consider how many of your Slaves had neither convenient Food to eat nor proper Raiment to put on, notwithstanding most of the Comforts you enjoy were solely owing to their indefatigable Labours.”¹⁸ Whitefield’s desire for slaves to have access to the Christianity that he held dear to his heart speaks to the disease of a relationship that never viewed slaves as being fully human. This notion of saving their souls while destroying their physical bodies presents the final theme in his work. The dehumanization by the utilization of the pen permitted defenders of slavery to have access to a false reality that was covered with hypocrisy methodologies. The tolerability of slavery lingered as a question of debate within Christianity for centuries, with several pro-slavery Christians issuing literature that provided narratives that reinforced stereotypes of enslaved Africans as benefiting from the institution of slavery. By the 1800s, Christianity reached a differing consensus on slavery heading to a consensus in favor of promoting slavery within

¹⁸ George Whitefield, 1714-1770. and Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790, printer. , “A Letter from the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina,” *John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, 471.

Christianity. Believing that the enslaved had souls while also benefiting off slaves being property that produce free labor, and could be bought and sold, while never viewing slavery as immoral allowed many denominations of Christianity to blossom into traditional powerhouses of immeasurable influencers. So then, as they insisted on baptizing children, they also partook in separating these children from their families, as they insisted on educating them in Christianity, they also agreed to laws that forbid them right to read the Bible. As they insist on allowing slaves to be able to marry, they permitted adultery by rape.

The Argument of the 1800s

As the consciousness towards slavery shifted with the progression of the nineteenth century, the understanding of slavery became a narrative that transformed into a sophisticated and consistent defense of the institution of slavery by Christians who preferred slavery. George Fitzhugh produced two books that he is best known for, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* in 1854, and *Cannibals All! or, Slaves Without Masters* in 1857. Fitzhugh was an American social theorist who argued that “Christian morality can find a little practical foothold in a community so constituted, that to “love our neighbor as ourself,” or “to do unto others as we would they should do unto us,” would be acts of suicidal self-sacrifice.”¹⁹ He was born in Prince William County and raised in King George County where he studied law before marrying and establishing a practice in Caroline County. Fitzhugh was renowned for his forceful and aggressive defense of slavery.²⁰ He struggled as a small planter, yet his ability to produce narratives in the defense of slavery provided him with a voice. He believed that the morality of Christianity in relationship to slavery bared little weight to how slaves responded to Christianity as he argued that “Christian morality, however, was not preached to free competitive society, but

¹⁹ George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals all!, or, Slaves without masters*, 47.

²⁰ Ibid., 47

to slave society, where it is neither very difficult nor unnatural to practice it.”²¹ Fitzhugh insisted that “Two great stumbling blocks are removed from the acceptance of Scripture when it is proved that slavery, which it recognizes, approves and enjoins, is promotive of men’s happiness and well-being, and that morality, which it inculcates, although wholly impracticable in a free society, is readily practiced in that form of society to which it was addressed.”²² He insisted in a theory of labor that was absolute, within this stance he argues for a “free society” with a demand of a labor system of slavery, reasoning, “It is impossible to place labor and capital in harmonious or friendly relations, except employing slavery.”²³ These observations had become ordinary in the South by this time as the defenders of slavery produce a narrative of slavery that functioned with many layers of revisionist thought.

Kevin N. Giles is an Australian evangelical Anglican priest and theologian who was in parish ministry for over 40 years. Published an article in *Evangelical Quarterly*, he notes that, while he often encountered the claim, “not one word of criticism did the Lord utter against slavery”; moreover, a number of his stories are set in a slave/master situation and involve slaves as key characters.”²⁴ Within this statement, Giles notes that these circumstances were used by pro-slavery apologists in the 19th century to suggest that Jesus approved of slavery. Nonetheless, pro-slavery Christians such as Fitzhugh’s writings were significant in their fight to defend slavery. From his driving thesis that he contends, “The profits, made from employing free labor are greater than those from slave labor.”²⁵ Seeks to permit his disposition of slavery to

²¹ George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals all! or, Slaves without masters*, 47.

²² *Ibid.*, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁴ Kevin Giles, “The Biblical Argument for Slavery: Can the Bible Mislead? *A Case Study in Hermeneutics*.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 66 (1994): p. 10. http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1994-1_003/pdf

²⁵ George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals all! or, Slaves without masters*, 25.

operate under a narrative in which slavery could only survive with the help of competition while insisting that enslaved Africans were like children.

In 1854, Fitzhugh produce another book, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society*, within this defense of slavery he attempted to change the narrative of slavery from a necessary evil to a positive good. One of his main emphases was to attack northern societies while also asserting that the inferiority of slaves made for social harmony within the slave-master relationship. Fitzhugh argues, “There is no rivalry, no competition to get employment among slaves, as among free laborers.”²⁶ He continues, “The master's interest prevents his reducing the slave's allowance or wages in infancy or sickness, for he might lost the slave by so doing.”²⁷ These thoughts offer a picture that many who opposed ending slavery attempted to paint, their love for the institution of slavery led them to esteem its features. Defenders of slavery used books, newspapers, pamphlets, poetry, published sermons, and other forms of literature, to spread their message. In addition to the utilization of literature, the supporters of slavery were assisted by the law of the land. As beforementioned, the Constitution of the United States presented one of the most profound narratives for the support of slavery. The intentional omission and obvious oversight to address slavery within the structure of this country’s leading legal document laid the foundation for pro-slavery Christians to condone their behaviors. Subliminally shielding slavery without unequivocally declaring slavery’s existence, the Constitution’s inability to properly address slavery produced one of history’s most perplexing ambiguities.

Therefore, individuals like Fitzhugh were able to leave a paper trail of their disposition towards slavery with a narrative that when far and beyond supporting their cause. Fitzhugh also

²⁶ George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals all!, or, Slaves without masters*, 246.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 246.

held firm to the belief that “Domestic slavery in the Southern States has produced the same results in elevating the character of the master that it did in Greece and Rome.”²⁸ Within this observation, he chooses to suggest that the master of slaves arrives at an exalted state by contending, “He is lofty and independent in his sentiments, generous, affectionate, brave and eloquent; he is superior to the Northerner, in every thing but the arts of thrift. History proves this.”²⁹ Within Fitzhugh's study, he attacks the northern society as corrupt while seeking to provide a narrative of slavery as a gentle system designed to “protect” the inferior Black race and promote social harmony, he continues, “A Yankee sometimes gets hold of the reins of State, attempts Apollo, but acts Phaeton. Scipio and Aristides, Calhoun and Washington, are the noble results of domestic slavery.”³⁰ His stance on the inferiority of the slave permits him to insist, “Like Egyptian obelisks’ mid the waste of time—simple, severe, sublime,—they point ever heavenward, and lift the soul by their examples.”³¹

Allowing the human rights of enslaved Africans and their descendants to be reduced to chattel while championing the individual rights of “White” men birthed a society that could dictate the who, how, when, and where within the story of Christianity and slavery. Christian supporters of slavery provided some of the most powerful voices that contradicted the Constitution’s language. For instance, in November of 1858, a review titled, *Debow’s Review*, argued:

Year after year has Congress assumed and exercised powers over the question of negro slavery, in utter disregard of the limitations of the Constitution, and the most unjust and oppressive character. At this very moment, the weight and influence of the Federal Government are being brought into most vigilant requisition against the adoption of one

²⁸ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society*, 244.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 244.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

of the most necessary, vital, and rightful Southern measures for the promotion of her agricultural prosperity and wealth that can engage the attention of her people.³²

These narratives demonstrated that those in favor of slavery were individuals with a mastery of language as well as possessing the ability to write their account of slavery while not providing the perspective of the slave. Omitting the horrors of family separation, overlooking the sexual abuse of enslaved women, and minimizing the inhumane workload of slavery, these defenders of slavery frequently resorted to quoting the Bible or presenting slavery as a love affair between the slave and his master. When defenders of slavery theorized about their moral responsibilities toward slaves, they often thought first of justification within their productions of literature. Their relationship with privilege allowed them to deliver a revisionist account of slavery that presented them as morally upstanding. Sadly, even when enslaved Africans adopted the religion of their slaveholders, they still were denied independence. For instance, Fitzhugh resisted the right of liberty to slaves, he saw the institution of slavery as a type of welfare system that provided for slaves, stating. “Now this is precisely the system of domestic slavery with us. We provide for each slave, in old age, and in infancy, in sickness and in health, not according to his labor, but according to his wants.”³³

Whereas slavery in the Northern states compared to the Southern states began to diverge due to the consideration of slavery from a Christian perspective. Southern states spoke profoundly of the Governments influence on their right to seek slavery within their states. Many Southern states demanded an increase in slave labor. According to the United States Census of 1860, nearly one in four families owned slaves in the Southern states.³⁴ The demand for slaves

³² DeBow’s review, *Agricultural, commercial, industrial progress and resources*. New Orleans [etc]; J.D.B. DeBow *The South Demands More Nergo Labor-Address to the People of Louisiana* [Volume 25, Issue: 5, Nov 1858; pp. 492. Making of America Journal Articles: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/maojrnl/acg1336.1-25.005/499>

³³ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society*, 245.

³⁴ U.S Census Bureau, “Census of Population and Housing, 1860.”

introduced an avenue that pro-slavery Christians utilized within their literature to defend, demand, and endorse slavery. The evolution of such literature permitted slavery to transform itself into different entities as the most enduring evils of enslavement have been captured within the many narratives that esteemed a disposition of racial inferiority, that has defined African Americans as less human. This belief in racial hierarchy birthed racial terror in the form of lynching, borne the legally codified segregation, and produced the breeding of our mass incarceration crisis. Fitzhugh reasoned that the Northern leaders and their perspective of slavery were the ones that were corrupt and not the South's system of society. He suggested:

Adams and Van Buren, cunning, complex and tortuous, are for exponents of the selfish system of universal liberty. Coriolanus, marching to the gates of Rome with dire hate and deadly indignation, is grand and noble in his revenge. Adams and Van Buren, insidiously striking with reptile fangs at the South, excite in all bosoms hatred and contempt; but we will not indulge in sweeping denunciation. In public and private life, the North has many noble and generous souls. Men who, like Webster and Cass, Dickinson and Winthrop, can soar lofty eloquence beyond the narrow prejudices of time and place, see man in all his relations, and condemn the narrow morality which makes the performance of one duty the excuse for a thousand crimes.³⁵

Fitzhugh argues that slavery is better than liberty and equality he speaks on the temperament of slaves, stating, "They have no dread of the future—no fear of want."³⁶ As he continues, he attempts to provide a rationale to how the slaves reliance on the system is a benefit to all parties involved. "A state of dependence is the only condition in which reciprocal affection can exist among human beings—the only situation in which the war of completion ceases, and peace, amity and good will arise."³⁷ Yet, his assessment of liberty and equality receives his rejection as he reasons, "A state of independence always begets more or less of jealous rivalry and hostility."³⁸ In 1969, Eugene D. Genovese assesses Fitzhugh's work with these observations:

³⁵ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society*, 244-245.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 246.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 246.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

Fitzhugh insisted that all labor, nor merely black, had to be enslaved and that the world must become all slave or all free. He defined “slavery” broadly to include all systems of servile labor. These views had become commonplace in the South by the 1850s. His originality lay in the insight that slavery could only survive and prevail if the capitalist world market were destroyed. He understood that organic social relations and attendant values could not survive in a world dominated by capitalist competition and bourgeois individualism.³⁹

The Legacy of Proslavery Christians Narratives

It is extremely difficult to give a single description of the relationship between Christianity and slavery in the United States that captures all its nuances. In what way can we interpret those who were the principal actors during slavery whether we consider them protagonists or antagonist—were slaves psychologically humans who struggled to end their bondage—or were they in fact “Sambos” who profited from the system of slavery? Or were the advocates of slavery and slaveholders evil individuals with heartless drive, unlimited grief, and negative intentions? The complex nature of such inquiries has arrived at various destinations within the narratives constructed on behalf of defenders of slavery. Their disposition offers illumination within their position in the system of slavery.

George Fitzhugh wrote:

Especially, however, is it true with slaves and masters, that to “do as they would be done by” is mutually beneficial. Good treatment and proper discipline render the slave happier, healthier, more valuable, grateful, and contented. Obedience, industry, and loyalty on the on the part of the slave increase the master’s ability and disposition to protect and take care of him. The interests of all the members of a natural family, slaves included, are identical. Selfishness finds no place, because nature, common feelings and self-interest “to love their neighbor as themselves,” and “to do as they would be done by,”—at least, within the precincts of the family.⁴⁰

Fitzhugh was not alone in his opinions of slavery, there were many Proslavery Christians with apologists’ ideologies for chattel slavery. Ownership of human beings can be identified as

³⁹ Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*, 151-155.

⁴⁰ George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals all! or, Slaves without masters*, 817.

the mark of oppression within the remembrance of slavery; however, historians of the American slave experience often don't agree. Defenders of slavery often utilized a paternalistic account to define the events of the institution of slavery. They insisted that the accounts of slavery had a great deal of explanatory power generally. Within their narratives of slavery, many supports of slavery allowed their explanations to permit them to portray certain aspects of slave society as justifiable with their paternalistic and Christian explanations. However, the apparent devotion that slaves had toward their masters confronts the slave status as being human, something that many slaveholders and defenders of slavery during slavery had denied. The reality is that for the slave to partake or enjoy the alleged benefits of a paternalistic master, he or she would have to give up all claims to respect as a responsible adult. Which was the definition of being a "Sambo."⁴¹

An American lawyer and historian from Harvard, Dr. James Schouler contributed to the inferiority narrative with his study in 1870. He delivered his account of slavery in his work, *History of the United States of America Under the Constitution*, Schouler argues that enslaved Africans and their descendants were, "the innate patience, docility, and child-like simplicity of the negro" who, he believed, was an "imitator and non-moralist," "learning" "deceit and libertinism with the facility," "being" "easily intimidated, incapable of deep plots"; in short, Negroes were "a black servile race, sensuous, stupid, brutish, obedient to the whip, children in imagination...."⁴² This sentiment was not restricted to the study of history within the 1800s, for instance in 1976, Historian Stanley Elkins provided an assessment of the impact of slavery

⁴¹ Robert B. Stepto. "Distrust of the Reader in Afro-American Narratives," in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *Reconstructing American Literary History*, 300-322.

⁴² James Schouler, *History of the United States of America Under the Constitution*, II, 264-267.

within his work *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, in which he addresses the damage done to slaves.

Elkins operated with the premise that psychological indoctrination was the defining mark of slavery, Elkins contention was a direct result of his assessment of the nature of slavery. The personality of slaves became deformed based on the restrictions on their behavior and how closely they were enforced. Elkins utilized the “Sambo thesis” to explain the way slaves had been psychologically indoctrinated into a mentality of subservience. Within this Sambo stereotypical stance, defenders of slavery insisted that the typical slave was docile but irresponsible, loyal but lazy, and humble but chronically given to lying and stealing. All these traits contradicted themselves and were the basis of the Proslavery Christian arguments and narratives. Slaves were also detailed as being full of infantile silliness and talked with childish exaggerations, thus, the master provide a safe environment for slaves who depended on the grace of their masters. Overall, Elkins reasoned that the conduct demonstrated by slaves was like that of concentration camp prisoners. Elkins concludes that slaves were “Sambos” citing that slaves’ exhibited few acts of resistance, suicide, and hatred towards their masters.⁴³

Historian John Blassingame has argued against the ‘Sambo’ personality, he contends that slaves were role-playing and that it ought to be regarded as one of three stereotypes of slaves, with “rebellious Nat” as the second, and “tricky Jack” being the third.⁴⁴ He also reasoned that slave’s developed their own culture within the slave society and that the system of slavery was not as closed as Elkins contends.”⁴⁵ Historian Kenneth Stamp wrote, “Slaves showed great

⁴³ Stanley Elkins, *Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) 82.

⁴⁴ John Blassingame, “Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,” in Davis and Gates, *The Slaves’ Narrative*, 78-97.

⁴⁵ John Blassingame, *Slave Testimony* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), ixv.

eagerness to get some—if they could not get all—of the advances of freedom.”⁴⁶ While

Sociologist Orlando Patterson presents an “natal alienation” stance of the slave, reasoning,

The loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generation. It also has the important bounce of loss of native status, of deracination. It was this alienation of the slave from all formal. Legally enforceable ties of “blood,” and from any attachment to groups or localities other than chosen for him by the master, that gave the relation of slavery its peculiar value to the master.⁴⁷

Yet within the confines of Historian James Oakes's study, he explores the history of slavery and concludes that American chattel slavery was contingent upon the political system. The legal system and the relationship between slaveholders were paradoxical in his view as he declares, “the fact that slaves were ‘totally’ subordinate to the masters did not mean that the master’s power over the slave was absolute.”⁴⁸ Whereas, Patterson speaks to the intended psychology of the slaveholder's acquisition of authority and concludes, “If the master sought to exclude as far as possible all other claims and powers in his slave, it nevertheless remains true that he needed both the recognition and the support of the non-slave members of his community for his assumption of sovereign power over another person.”⁴⁹ He also presents a deeper look at the procurement of influence by the slave relationship and reasoning.

From the community at large, authority came with the institutionalization of the slave relationship. It was achieved by incorporating it into the normative order. As Siegfried Lauffer puts it, the power relationship (*Gewaltverhältnis*) that formed the basis of the slave relationship had to become a rights relationship (*Rechtsverhältnis*).⁵⁰

Thomas Roderick Drew, a professor and eventual president of the college William & Mary reasoned:

⁴⁶ Kenneth Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South*, 430

⁴⁷ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 8.

⁴⁸ James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 155.

⁴⁹ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 35

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

In looking to the texture of the population of our country, there is nothing so well calculated to arrest the attention of the observer, as the existence of negro slavery throughout a large portion of the confederacy. A race of people differing from us in color and in habits, and vastly inferior in the scale of civilization, have been increasing and spreading. ‘growing with our growth, and strengthening with our strength.’ Until they have become intertwined with every fibre of society. Go through our southern country, and every where you see the negro slave by the side of the white man; you find him alike in the mansion of the rich, the cabin of the poor, the workshop of the mechanic, and the field of the planter. Upon the contemplation of a population framed like this, a curious and interesting question readily suggests itself to the inquiring mind: —Can these two distinct races of people, now living together as master and servant, be separated? Can the black be sent back to his African home, or will the day ever arrive when he can be liberated from his thralldom, and mount upwards in the scale of civilization and rights, to an equality with the white?⁵¹

Narratives often fashioned an honest attempt to examine the factors of slavery and Drew’s willingness to contend that slaves were an inferior race contributed to the struggle for liberation. Defining the terms of engagement within slavery often found views of inferiority that were perpetuated by the many assessments of with the favoring or support of slavery. Examining their perspective of slavery accounts for essential features of thought that were displayed by these defenders, who did not consider the psychological conditions of the slave within the institution of slavery. Many of the theses that historians and pro-slavery Christians insist on are not found within the perspective of slaves’ accounts of the totality of slavery. The relationship between slavery and Christianity openly embraced a tradition of alienation. This in turn produced a tendency of turning a blind eye toward the evidence that slavery held little to no Christian proponents that offered the slave valuable access to liberty. Cruelty was a mechanism available to slaveholders within their toolbelt as slaves were subjected to psychological abuse and were also brutalized physically. While the smoke and mirrors of Christianity concealed the behavior of slaveholders, their dependency on the whip or other cruel punishment represented the solution to

⁵¹ Thomas Roderick Dew, *An Essay on Slavery*, 3.

the disobedience of slaves. The utilization of cruelty cannot be located within the Bible, yet within the reality of slavery, Christian masters prudently turn to the methodology of cruel and unusual punishment. The threat of cruelty was a tactic that slaveholders employed, both were omission from the argument, narratives, and portrayals of those Christians' who were in favor of slavery literary materials.

Understanding how this occurred is no easy matter, most Christians who choose to support slavery when faced with the problem of addressing the cruelty of slavery were content to cite passages from the Bible. They ignored the brutality of slavery in their analysis and spoke of the Bible as their source of authority. The full mechanics of this methodology is beyond the scope of the examination of the master-slave relationship, as the many theories of historians have captured in many cases the heart of the matter. The condition of slavery no matter the research finds that slavery carried few exemptions from torture. The feudal system of chattel slavery provoked the services of slaves while separating them from their humanity, however, the accounts of slaves and former slaves award history with another voice within the equation. Defending slavery came with moral permissibility that approved the institution of slavery as a reasonable chapter.

The Other Side of the Coin

The perspective of those who experience slavery firsthand presents an invaluable view of the legacy of slavery within the relationship between Christianity and slavery. In 1803 Lunsford Lane provides a vocal opposition to the positive spin that Christian defenders of slavery presented within their chronicles of slavery. Lunsford bought his freedom for himself, and his family, he published his account of his life within bondage, in his book, *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C. Embracing an Account of His Early Life, the*

Redemption by Purchase of Himself and his Family from Slavery, and His Banishment from the Place of His Birth for the Crime of Wearing a Colored Skin, in which he declares:

When I began to work, I discovered the difference between myself and my master's white children. They began to order me about, and were told to do so by my master and mistress. I found, too, that they had learned to read, while I was not permitted to have a book in my hand. To be in possession of anything written or printed, was regarded as an offence. And then there was the fear that I might be sold away from those who were dear to me, and conveyed to the far south. I learned, that, being a slave, I was subject to this worst (to us) of all calamities; and I knew of others in similar situations to myself, this sold away. My friends were not numerous; but in proportion as they were few they were dear; and the thought that I might be separated from them forever, was like that of having the heart torn from its socket; while the idea of being conveyed to the far south seemed infinitely worse than the terrors of death. To know, also, that I was never to consult my own will, but was entirely under control of another, was a state of mind hard for me to bear. Indeed all things now made me *feel*, what I had only known in words, that *I was a slave*.⁵²

Lunsford would contradict the descriptions of the defenders of slavery by planning and executing a plan to gain his freedom. He continues:

One day, while I was in this state of mind, my father gave me a small basket of peaches, I sold them for thirty cents, which was the first money I ever had in my life. Afterwards I won some marbles, and sold them for sixty cents, and some weeks after, Mr. Hog, from Fayetteville, came to visit my master, and on leaving gave me one dollar. After that, Mr. Bennahan, from Orange county gave me a dollar and a son of my master fifty cents. These sums, and the hope that then entered my mind of purchasing at some future time my freedom made me long for money: and plans for money-making tool the principal possession of my thoughts.⁵³

Lane's resistance to identifying himself as an abolitionist within his narrative is significant, thus, his determination to earn money to obtain his freedom takes center stage. Some historians and Christians allies of slavery contend that this act represents his willingness to work within the system of slavery, however, it is hard to accept that Lane embraced the system of slavery. After losing a large amount of money and losing hope for obtaining his and his family's

⁵² Lunsford Lane, *The Narrative Life of Lunsford Lane*, 7-8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

freedom he examines the hope of a new plan when his master dies, and his mistress receives ownership of him and his family. He reasoned:

At this time an event occurred, which, while it cast a cloud over the prospects of some of my fellow slaves, was a rainbow over mine. My master died: and his widow, by the will, became sole executrix of his property. To the surprise of all, the bank of which he had been cashier, presented a claim against the estate for forty thousand dollars. By a compromise, this sum was reduced to twenty thousand dollars: and my mistress, to meet the amount, sold some of her slaves, and hired out others. I hired my time of her, for which I paid her a price varying from one hundred dollars to one hundred and twenty dollars per year. This was a privilege which comparatively few slaves at the south enjoy: and in this I felt truly blessed.⁵⁴

Therefore, his goal was to escape to a state where slavery was illegal, and he and his family could gain their freedom. His friendships with wealthy white slave owners permitted his freedom, but in the end, his hope was true freedom. Within this example, Lane overcomes several stereotypes utilized by individuals who favored the continued enslavement of Africa and Africa Americas. He is the opposite of the “Sambo” typecast and willingly confronts the obstacles that obstruct his freedom with deliberate determination. The narratives of slaves or former slaves cultivate opposition to the pro-slavery Christians' disposition, the perspective of those who suffered under the cruelty of bondage details the intangibles of enslaved Africans' ability to overcome. Lane details the struggle for him to gain his and his family's freedom with a perspective that points to his humanity. After gaining favor with his mistress, Lane performs several entrepreneurial affairs and earns his freedom, he continues these efforts and earns the money needed to purchase his wife and kids. But as he attempts to return to buy their freedom, he is accused of owning abolitionist material, jailed, escaped from jail, was also put to death, and finally allowed to purchase the freedom of his family. His story offers noteworthy insight into

⁵⁴ Lunsford Lane, *The Narrative Life of Lunsford Lane*, 14-15.

the plight of slaves, the systems in place to hold enslaved Africans in bondage restricted the actions of slaves with particulars that stood as acceptable measures.

Another notable account of overcoming slavery comes from James William Charles Pennington, who escaped slavery in western Maryland and reached New York at the age of 19. He was born into slavery on the eastern shore of Maryland in 1807, his escape was on the year of 1828, and he received his education at night school. Pennington concentrated in an unofficial class at Yale College in New Haven, although Yale prohibited him from officially enrolling and forbade him from using its library, he attained a wealth of knowledge, nonetheless. In fact, in 1838 he presided at the wedding of Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass, during the 1840s and 1850s he pastored African Congregational churches in Newtown, Long Island; Hartford, Connecticut; and New York City, gaining international recognition as an antislavery orator, minister, writer, and abolitionist.⁵⁵ In his work, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, he writes:

My feelings are always outraged when I hear them speak of “kind master”—“Christian masters,”—“the mildest form of slavery,”—“well fed and clothed slaves,” an extenuation of slavery; I am satisfied they either mean to pervert the truth, or they do not know what they say. The being of slavery, its soul and body, lives and moves in the chattel principle, the property principle, the bill of sale principle; the cart-whip, starvation, and nakedness, are its consequences to a greater or less extent, warring with the dispositions of men.⁵⁶

How much power did the pro-slavery Christian gain with the construction of narratives, upon Rev. Pennington’s observation of Christianity and slavery he approaches this inquiry with the exhaustion of the burden of the oppressed. He reasons that the notion of “kind masters” goes beyond any attempt to dress up slavery as acceptable. The strategy of pro-slavery Christians, scholars who defended slavery, and countless other contributors to the practice of offering

⁵⁵ Pennington, James W.C. (1807-1870). *Encyclopedia of Emancipation and Abolition in the Transatlantic World*. Vol. 2, 2007.

⁵⁶ James W. C. Pennington, *The Fugitive Blacksmith; or, Events in the History of James W.C. Pennington*, iv.

explanations of slavery fail to realize that slavery is an incompatible enduring event that exceeds our conceptions. Providing new justifications for slavery leaves room for more excuses, rationalizations, and reasons that undermine the direct input of slaves' perspectives. In the general sense, the approach of an explanation works to answer an inquiry about why or how something occurred, whereas justifications are rationalizations that work to defend negative behaviors. Thus, when the pro-slavery Christians and others attempt to move their agenda of defending the behavior of slaveholders, their decision to offer justification, excuses, or educational theories water down the accounts of slavery. Patrick Henry is revered for his famous quote of liberty, but this man of faith was a slaveholder as well. Another quote that should accompany his stance on liberty should be this perspective that he wrote:

Every thinking honest man rejects slavery in speculation, how few in practice? Would anyone believe that I am Master of slaves of my own purchase? I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them, I will not, I cannot justify it.⁵⁷

Thus, even when slaveholders were considered kind, their unwillingness to exist without the assistance of slavery motivated them to hold slaves in oppressive conditions. Slaves viewed this condition as oppressive regardless of the literature that spoke to the contrary. The despair of slavery when approaching the concept of ownership in slavery demands a continued focus on the views of the slaves. Within this despair, even the great Frederick Douglass began to dissipate his hope of seeing blacks achieve equality in his lifetime. After emancipation, he had hoped that the United States would advance liberty which he and other absolutists had argued for. In the book, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, Waldo Martin contends that Douglass thought that the peonage system blacks found themselves enmeshed in after emancipation made freedom a sham.⁵⁸

Douglass authored this disposition:

⁵⁷ Katz ed., *Five Slave Narratives: A Compendium*, xi.

⁵⁸ Waldo Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*,

That he is worse off, in many respects, than when he was a slave, I am compelled to admit, but I contend that the fault is not his, but that of his heartless accusers. He is victim of a cunningly devised swindle, one which paralyzes his energies, suppresses his ambition, and blasts all his hopes; and though he is nominally free he is actually a slave. I here and now denounce his so-called emancipation as a stupendous fraud—a fraud upon him, a fraud upon the world.⁵⁹

Thus, the fraud of emancipation during the antebellum period constrained African Americans as they were confronted with a harsh reality. Attempting to navigate a system that was supported by the religion of the land as well as the laws of the land created a larger gap for African Americans attempting to attain liberty. Within this period, Georgia law stated:

The free person of color is entitled to no right of citizenship, except such as are specially given by law. His status differs from that of the slave in this: No master having dominion over him, he is entitled to the free use of his liberty, labor and property, except so far as he is restrained by law. All laws enacted in reference to slaves, and in their nature applicable to free persons of color, shall be construed to include them, unless specially excepted.⁶⁰

This experience was compounded for enslaved women during slavery as the practice of pasting on bondage to the child was adopted. The concept of “*partus sequitur ventrem*” required that the child of a slave followed the condition of the mother. Which was a neat method of extending the life of slavery as this stamp of social inferiority allowed children that white slaveholders fathered to remain in bondage. Harriet Jacobs details the horrors of *partus sequitur ventrem*, in 1861 under the pseudonym Linda Brent she authored the book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, where she wrote:

Sometime, when my master found that I refused to accept what he called his kind offers, he would threaten to sell my child. Perhaps that will humble you, said he.

Humble me! Was I not already in the dust? But his threat lacerated my heart. I knew the law gave him power to fulfill it; for slaveholders have been cunning enough to enact that “the child shall follow the condition of the mother,” not the father, thus taking care that licentiousness shall not interfere with avarice. . . . When they told me my new-born babe

⁵⁹ Frederick Douglass, “I Denounce the So-Called Emancipation as a Stupendous Fraud,” in the Voice of Black America, 526.

⁶⁰ Wilson Theodore Brantner, *The Black Codes of the South*, 35.

was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men, but it is far more terrible for women.⁶¹

This dilemma allowed the pro-slavery Christians the ability to position their narrative as an accurate account. Within the mist of slaveholders providing themselves access to father children with their slaves, the plight of those in bondage created a period in which the only thing that slaves lost was their chains. Frederick Douglass confronted this reality as he wrote:

I had hope that the relations subsisting between the former slaves and the old master class would gradually improve; but while I believe this, and still have some such weak faith, I have seen enough. Heard enough and learned enough of the condition of these people in South Carolina and Georgia to make me welcome any movement which will take them out of the wretched condition which I now know them to be. While I shall continue to labor for increased justice for those who stay in the South, I give you my hearty ‘Godspeed’ your emigration scheme. I believe you are doing good work.⁶²

Unable to consider capturing autonomy, Douglass articulates the desperation of an entire culture of people stuck at a standstill. As the walls of slavery came down, new fortifications took their place to govern African Americans. One might think that with emancipation the hearts of slaves would rejoice and be glad. Those who escaped slavery lived to see its features reimaged, repurpose, and reinstated. This fatigue that African Americans experience can be witnessed in the work of David Walker. Walker was born on September 28, 1785, in Wilmington to a slave as a father and a free woman as a mother. His father died before his birth, and the fact that his mother was free made him free as well as he followed the condition of his mother. Despite this “free” status, Walker grew up stifled by life in a slave society, over time he matured and developed a strong dislike for the institution of slavery. Eventually, he grew tired of the conditions of the south and departed, stating that “If I remain in this bloody land, I will not live

⁶¹ Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 117-19.

⁶² Frederick Douglass, “I Denounce the So-Called Emancipation as a Stupendous Fraud.” in *The Voice of Black America*, 521.

long. . . . I cannot remain where I must hear the slaves' chains continually and where I must encounter the insults of their hypocritical enslavers."⁶³

As a "freeman" he was able to travel extensively around the country and eventually settled in Boston in 1827. Establishing a profitable secondhand clothing business, he was known for his generosity and benevolence as he helped the poor and needy. His care for runaway slaves was another attribute that was associated with his character, in 1828 he married a woman known only as Emily, who was most likely a fugitive slave herself. In September of 1828, Walker published his seventy-six-page pamphlet entitled *Walker's Appeal in Four Articles: Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*.⁶⁴ Within his appeal, he confronts the relationship between Christianity and slavery on several different fronts, Walker declares:

in the course of my Appeal, to the satisfaction of the most incredulous mind, that we Coloured People of these United States, are, the most wretched, degraded and abject set of beings that over lived since the world began, down to the present day, and that, the white Christians of America, who hold us in slavery, (or, more properly speaking, pretenders to Christianity,) treat is more cruel and barbarous than any Heathen nation did any people whom it had subjected, or reduced to the same condition, that the Americans (who are, notwithstanding, looking for the Millennial day) have us. All I ask is, for a candid and careful perusal of this the third and last edition of my Appeal, where the world may see that we, the Blacks or Coloured People, are treated more cruel by the white Christians of America, than devils themselves ever treated a set of men, women and children on this earth.⁶⁵

Within his emotional approach of detailing the obstacles of slavery and the treatment of African Americans, Walker antagonizes the Christianity of America. He avoids the literary gestures of his generation and aggressivity sets his focus on the hypocrisy of the Christian values

⁶³ "Lives & Letters – Dictionary of North Carolina Biography (Third Volume) Edited by William S. Powell." *The Virginia quarterly review* 65, no. 4 (1989) docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/bio/html

⁶⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁵ Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, Electronic Edition, retrieve from docsouth.unc.edu.nc.walker.walker.html, page verso.

that existed in 1828. He addresses these Christians as enemies as he continues, “It is expected that all coloured men, woman and children, Who are not too deceitful, abject, and servile to resist the cruelties and murders inflicted upon us by the white slave holders, our enemies by nature.”⁶⁶

Seeking to land on common ground with his audience, Walker insists that the condition of African Americans whether in bondage or free is a life of pain and struggle within the confines of a Christian majority. Notwithstanding, he presents the story of the Israelites and their deliverance as reassurance for himself and his people, as he contends:

Let them remember, that though our cruel oppressors and murderers, may (if possible) treat us more cruel, as Pharoah did the children of Israel, yet the God of the Ethiopians, has been pleased to hear out moans in consequence of oppression; and the day of our redemption from abject wretchedness draweth near, when we shall be enabled, in the most extended sense of the word, to stretch forth our hands to the LORD our GOD. But there must be a willingness on our part, for GOD to do these things for us, for we may be assured that he will not take us by the hairs of our head against our will and desire, and drag us from our very, mean, low and abject condition.⁶⁷

Walker presents the particulars of his observations and his personal experiences with slavery in a manner that addresses many of the ills and social norms that plagued America within this period. His reflections came from a privileged position as he was not subject to direct contact with the cold hand of bondage, yet he didn’t distance himself from the plight of his brothers and sisters. He also places a large amount of emphasis to declare that African Americans were not just humans, but citizens of the United States, as he insists:

“My dearly beloved Brethren and Fellow Citizens.

HAVING traveled over a considerable portion of these United States, and having, in the course of my travels, taken the most accurate observations of things as they exist— the result of my observations has warranted the full and unshaken conviction, that we, (coloured people of these United States,) are the most degraded, wretched, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began; and I pray God that none like us ever may live again until time shall be no more. They tell us of the Israelites in Egypt, the Helots in

⁶⁶ Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, Electronic Edition, retrieve from docsouth.unc.edu/nc.walker.walker.html, page verso.

⁶⁷ Ibid., page verso.

Sparta, and the Roman Slaves, which last were made up from almost every nation under heaven, whose no more than a sypher – or, in other words, those heathen nations of antiquity, had but little more among them than the name and from slavery, while wretchedness and endless miseries were reserved, apparently in a phial, to be poured out upon our fathers, ourselves and our children, by *Christian America*!⁶⁸

Urging slaves to resist and free themselves Walker's emotional plea directs his brethren to overlook the risk involved. He asked, "Had you rather not be killed," boldly declaring, "than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife, and dear little babies?" He insists that repentance is necessary for white Christian Americans and speaks of judgment being a significant occurrence that is coming to pass. He argues they should not be deceived by the "outwardly servile character of the Nergo," and that "a primitive force in the black slave that, once aroused, will make him a magnificent fighter." He claims that America belonged more to blacks than to whites because "we have enriched it with our blood and tears" as he condemns the method in which America was colonized.⁶⁹

By the summer of 1830, Walker's contribution had caused apprehension in North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia as circulation of the *Appeal* became popular. Copies were smuggled in ships from Boston and New York, where they were distributed by different individuals. Walker's *Appeal* made its first appearance in Wilmington, North Carolina, and between the rumors and excitement over the pamphlet, soon the whispers of insurrections increased, and slaveholders became enraged with the mention of the *Appeal*. Viewed as an inflammatory document, petitions from many of the communities within North Carolina petitioned the governor with fears and concerns over slaves' behaviors once the pamphlet had reached their plantation. Governor John Owen presented a copy of Mr. Walker's *Appeal* to the

⁶⁸ Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, Electronic Edition, retrieve from docsouth,unc.edu.nc.walker.walker.html, 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3.

legislature in November of 1830, Owen's stance on the document was one of irritation, and he advised the legislative members to deem the material as combative while also insisting that measures had to be put into place to avert the dangers to come.⁷⁰

The response to Walker's *Appeal* by pro-slavery Christians created a hostile environment for all parties involved within the peculiar institution. Walker openly confronted stereotypes questioned the logic of slavery and demanded justice on all levels for the treatment of African Americans. On page 9 of his work, he states:

My beloved brethren: -- The Indians of North and of South America -- the Greeks -- the Irish, subjected under the king of Great Britain -- the Jews, that ancient people of the Lord -- the inhabitants of the islands of the sea --in fine, all the inhabitants of the earth, (except however, the sons of Africa) are called *men*, and of course are, and ought to be free. But we, (coloured people) and our children are *brutes!!* and of course are, and ought to be SLAVES to the American people and their children forever!! to dig their mines and work their farms; and this go on enriching them, form one generation to another with our *blood* and our *tears!!!*⁷¹

The sentiments expressed within Walker's *Appeal* find its power within his willingness to challenge the narratives that are at the heart of the argument over slavery. How did a Christian nation come to the point of justifying cruelty, and at what cost would this nation commit so many resources to sustain such a system? The work of Mr. Walker highlights the use of the Bible to condemn the institution of slavery while also targeting the double standard within the moral Christian heritage of this period. On page 10, he uses the book of Genesis in the Bible as evidence of the hypocrisy of the United States as he presents Joseph and his affairs in Egypt:

Americans do us, at the present day. For the information of such, I would only mention that the Egyptians, were Africans or coloured people, such as we are -- some of them yellow and others -- a mixture of Ethiopians and the natives of Egypt -- about the same as you see the coloured people of the United States at the present day, -- I say, I call your

⁷⁰ Dictionary of North Carolina Biography edited by William S. Powell, retrieve from docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/bio.html

⁷¹ Walker's *Appeal*, in *Four Articles; Together with a Preamble*, Electronic Edition, retrieve from docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html, 9.

attention then, to the children of Jacob, while I point out particularly to you his son Joseph among the rest, in Egypt.

And Pharaoh, said unto Joseph, thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

Now I appeal to heaven and to earth, and particularly to the American people themselves, who cease not to declare that our condition is not *hard*, and that we are comparatively satisfied to rest in wretchedness and misery, under them and their children. Not, indeed, to show me a coloured President, a Governor, a Legislator, a Senator, a Mayor, or an Attorney at the Bar. – But to show me a man of colour, who holds the low office of a Constable, or one who sits in a Juror Box, own on a case of one of his wretched brethren, throughout this great Republic !!—But let us pass Joseph the son of Israel a little farther in review, as he existed with that heathen nation.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphath-paaneah, and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

Compare the above, with the American institutions. Do they not institute laws to prohibit us from marrying whites? I would wish, candidly, however, before the Lord, to be understood, that I would not give a *pinch of snuff* to be married to any white person I ever saw in all the days of my life. And I do say it, that the black man, or man of colour, who will leave his own colour (provided he can get one, who is good for any thing) and marry a white woman, to be a double slave to her, just because she is *white*, ought to be treated by her as he surely will be, viz: as a NIGER!!!! It is not, indeed, what I care about inter-marriages with the whites, which induced me to pass this subject in review; for the Lord knows, that there is a day coming when they will be glad enough to get into the company of the blacks, notwithstanding, we are, in this generation, leveled by them, almost on a level with the brute creation: and some of us they treat even worse than they do the brutes that perish. I only made this extract to show how much lower we are held, and how much more cruel we are treated by the Americans, than were the children of Jacob, by the Egyptians. --We will notice the sufferings of Israel some further, under *heathen Pharaoh*, compared with ours under the *enlightened Christians of America*.⁷²

The influence of Walker's *Appeal* has been eclipsed within the scope of time by acts of insurrections, protests, and other Civil Rights activities. Nonetheless, his exertion presents a

⁷² Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, Electronic Edition, retrieve from docsouth,unc.edu.nc.walker.walker.html, 10-11.

major turning point in antebellum race relations throughout the South. His work failed to win the support of most Abolitionists or free blacks due largely to its insistence on extreme measures and violence. However, a new and wider audience embraced Walker's message in 1848, which came with a biographical sketch of Walker by Henry Highland Garnet. A New Yorker, Garnet was a prominent black minister, newspaper editor, and Abolitionist, his contribution produced a greater network of support for the *Appeal*. Three months after the publication of Walker's third edition of his pamphlet, he died in the city of Boston. It is widely believed that he was poisoned as the result of the large rewards that Southern slaveholders pursued his death, nonetheless, the cause of his death remains a mystery. His son, Edward G. Walker was born after his death and in 1866 became the first black elected to the Massachusetts state legislature.⁷³

Walker's harsh and aggressive words stood as a narrative that defended the existence of African Americans and challenged their condition in America, his impassioned examination, and reflections on the slow and painstaking progress towards a radical crescendo speak to the painful reality that he endured. The *Appeal* seems to exhibit one of the earliest written examples of the classical African American narratives, its inflammatory nature provides emotional petitions, scriptural analogy, and historical scrutiny. It urges African Americans to become fighters for their freedom. Walker's eyewitness accounts of slavery confronted the hypocrisy of colonizers at a time when his argument was so dangerous, that he thought he'd be killed or put into slavery. His argument provides context to this hypocrisy as he opposes liberal theory, within his work he points out how slavery is a direct violation of human rights, and that slavery is financially and

⁷³ Dictionary of North Carolina Biography edited by William S. Powell, retrieve from docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/bio.html

societally incentivized. Utilizing the religious fervor of this period, Walker declares “We must and shall be free I say, in spite of you.”⁷⁴

Proslavery Christians and the defenders of slavery didn’t find Walker’s *Appeal* relatable, and they boldly disagreed with his assessment of God and his biblical view of justice. They had a hard time understanding and appreciating other languages and many of them reacted to his work in similar fashions as Governor John Owen. Nonetheless, as the wheels of time have arrived at different destinations, Walker’s work represents the period in a much more objective sense. The mentality of those held in bondage must have felt as Old Testament as it gets, as the Old Testament of the Bible often speaks of the breaking of chains. The candid expression of Walker’s observations of slavery also provides several complexities, Walker was born free and within his work often refers to those who were born into slavery as ignorant, this may feel as if he was disconnected.

However, this acknowledgment of their intelligence was an enduring path to evoke his brethren to comprehend their true plight. The Christian fervent belief that supported slavery was a strategy that used the Bible as a great document as a social mentality tool to keep enslaved Africans in bondage. Walker’s political approach avoids sugar-coating slavery for the convenience and comfort of the reader. He takes his readers through his feelings of anger, sadness, pity, frustration, outrage, unbelief, shock, inspiration, and hope, as he comprehends that his sincere expressions on slavery within his work helped to eradicate the narratives constructed by pro-slavery Christians. Walker is equally passionate and offended, his shifts in tone reveal his battle with anger and anguish and his differing theories reveal his struggle between resentment

⁷⁴ Walker’s *Appeal*, in *Four Articles; Together with a Preamble*, Electronic Edition, retrieve from [docsouth.unc.edu/nc.walker.walker.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html), 89.

and sorrow. These sets of emotions provided instruction in the fight to demolish the narratives constructed by pro-slavery Christians.

The avenues of escaping slavery were an ongoing and uphill battle that Lane, Pennington, Douglass, Jacobs, and Walker all documented. Within the margins of their work, the particulars of the relationship between Christianity and slavery offer clarity to the intense and painful life of those in bondage. Their efforts constructed a kind of preface to literature that overcame the inferiority stereotype that hung over the heads of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Douglass provides insight into the plight of slaves and the desire for freedom within his autobiography as he declares:

You are loosed from your moorings. and are free: I am fast in my chains, and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale. and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom's swift-winged angels. that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of iron! O that I were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing! Alas! betwixt me and you, the turbid waters roll. Go on, go on. O that I could also go! Could I but swim! If I could fly! O, why was I born a man. of whom to make a brute! The glad ship is gone; she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. O God, save me! God, deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not stand it. Get caught, or get clear. I'll try it. I had as well die with ague as the fever. I have only one life to lose. I had as well be killed running as die standing. Only think of it; one hundred miles straight north, and I am free! Try it? Yes! God helping me, I will. It cannot be that I shall live and die a slave.⁷⁵

Douglass was a man of faith and as such he wanted to believe that all men of faith were, at their core, decent men. His desperation was powerful while his horrific portrait of slavery defines the nature of the politics of the country. Eloquent and influential the details of narratives from the hands of free African Americans, slaves, and former slaves feature their experience with the brutality that they encountered. Their narratives shared various, intricate facts of slave existence, from being separated from their mothers at a young age to rape, whippings, abuse, and

⁷⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, 62.

denial of any human rights or sense of self. The glimpses into the various attitudes towards those of African descent with the various slave owners' determinations to prolong the life of slavery. The opposite side of the coin sees how those held hostages are committed to becoming educated in steering their pursuit of happiness. The insight of those who opposed slavery with their visceral and important narratives. Douglass asks a sincere question, "Does a righteous God govern the universe?"⁷⁶

These narratives position their dispositions within a rich tradition of pro-slavery narratives in two senses. First, many former slaves published accounts of their experiences that exposed the true nature of slavery and its relationship with Christianity. This fact has been poorly acknowledged within the educational system, while the work of white abolitionists has been much celebrated. Secondly, the literary interests of the period, absorbed by these defenders of freedom, covert, voracious reading, are expressed through the lyrical and dramatic qualities of their prose. Christianity within the world of slavery gave way to the experienced of slaves and African Americans who withstood brutal overseers and slaveholders. The determination to gain freedom within a system of complete exploitation.

The ire of religious slaveholders manifested itself with the boldest of all frauds and the grossest of all libels. The acts of those who escaped slavery are the greatest story of defying the odds as their singular strength coupled with their yearning for liberty required everything. These men and women embraced their limitations and incorporated survival skills that open the door for future generations to eventually escape the imprisonment of slavery. The picture painted by those with courage under the fire of slavery accounted for the frightening affair of American history.

⁷⁶ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, 73.

Conclusion

Within the historical documents that represented the periods of slavery, the differing ideologies reflect the totality of the relationship between Christianity and slavery. On one hand, you can observe the stance that Christian defenders of slavery occupied. As Christians, they found justification in the peculiar institution of slavery. Their assessment of God and their Biblical view of slavery provided them with a language in which they spoke proudly of slavery. Those who opposed slavery saw the institution as discrimination against African Americans and women from an identical stance. Proslavery Christians and the defenders of slavery imposed a structure of equality and entitlement that placed them at the top, and everyone else far beneath them. The liberty and justice that are lauded within the remembrance of America openly omitted all parties outside of white men into this equation. The arguments that Christian supporters and their allies composed demanded that they sat at the top of the economic and social freedom tree. The true mindset of slavery and its cruelty exposes the individual Christians who favored slavery and slaveholders' acts made in the name of Christianity.

The type of fear, brutality, and oppression that most slaves experienced that have been detailed throughout history have been received with little compassion and humanity. Nonetheless, in the face of such resistance, those who faced such harsh realities overcame the dehumanizing attributes of slavery. The belief that Christianity and slavery were incompatible has been refuted by accounts that men and women of African descent have penned. In their efforts to construct an accountable remembrance, the revisionist accounts of pro-slavery Christians have constructed the practice of presenting slavery as a beneficial affair. The condition and character of pro-slavery Christians forcefully suggested that slaves were content

with their status, such practices were part of the character of slavery. The pursuit of freedom coupled with the attempts to attain citizenship as Christianity served as a barrier and source of hope for those in bondage. The uncommon talents of slaves influenced their ability to withstand the Christianity of slavery. The feelings within the adventures of escaping slavery often ensued during the hazardous periods of the day, which permitted the accounts of those who opposed slavery to showcase the identity of America.

The compelling narratives on both sides of the coin offer insight into the depths of anguish and despair coupled with the insidious evils of chattel slavery that made up a nation completely engaged in differing ideologies. The demand for freedom among the converted slaves within the history of the United States stands as a defining experience. The common arguments of pro-slavery Christians evoke the difficulties in attempting to grasp the significance of slavery. The hermeneutic challenge of approaching the issue of slavery with the obvious philosophical approaches leaves space for modifications of slavery. Certain fundamental principles of slavery applied to the culture of America while the relationship between slavery and Christianity remained an invaluable part of life. The arguments and narratives constructed with Christian dispositions served as a rationale that was fundamentally Christian.

Chapter 3 The interpretation of the Bible

The interpretation of the Bible was a favorite method of slaveholders and their allies, their interpretation of the Bible became a mode that provided them with tunnel vision. Within the confines of continuing the theme of exploring the relationship between Christianity and slavery, it is from this unique vantage point that one must embrace the notion that interpretation can be positioned in such a way that properly examines defenders of slavery clarification of the Bible, therefore, one must allow their explanation of God's word to be investigated. When advocates of slavery interrupted the Bible, their ideologies create a biased interpretation that result in an obstructed sense of logic. Which in turn would manipulate the explanation or meaning of comprehending the literature of God's Word. Often those Proslavery Christian(s) operated in a fashion in which they attempt to utilize stylistic representation of a historical document(s) to support their cause or beliefs. When confronted with the possibility of differing interpretations, those who choose to defend slavery expressed their analysis as an explanation or as an excuse for their performance. Within the scope of history, a poor interpretation of the Bible has led to deadly consequences.

Introduction

Within the early 1800s, both Proslavery and Antislavery Christians attempted to find the meaning and significance of the Bible, but the literature of the Holy word was held hostage by those who elected to use the words of the Bible as a defense for slavery and the understanding or lack of understanding of its stories create a vehicle of misconceptions. When utilized as a weapon, the ability to ask yourself both what the text means and why it is important has produced different results. In the confines of America Christianity during slavery, Biblical verses were interpreted as a source of guidance on how slavery should be practiced, and many of the so-called regulations that came from the Bible were utilized to keep slaves in their respective places throughout history. Many Christians who elected to support slavery spoke vociferously against anti-slavery suggestions when they were proposed. These defenders of slavery in both the South and the North, formulated a set of arguments to support slavery as their understanding of the Bible informed their stance on social norms. As political tensions in the country drew closer to conflict, Southerners held ever firmer to their quarrels. Linking enslaved Africans and their descendants to animal-like beings, for example comparing the appearance of enslaved Africans to monkeys or apes, was a common belief slaveholders and their supporters held. Enslaved Africans as a race, were often suggested that their dark skin was a sign from God that they were conditioned to be laborers in summer states that bared hot to warm conditions that were like their homeland of Africa.

The abolishment movement indicted Southern culture with books and pamphlets that focused on the power that slavery provided slaveholders. Mulatto children were an obvious consequence of sexual exploitation as the inconsistency of Christian morality exceeded the dynamic of the slave-master relationship. Writings meant to situate slavery as an essential

quantity of the nation's moral stability, and economic future, and the nation's perceived honor were manufactured by Southern writers, intellectuals, and clergymen to combat equality. Nonetheless, the way that Christians who protected slavery and defenders of slavery interpreted the Bible fabricated the basis in which the institution of slavery and Christianity functioned within the crucial adolescent years of the development of the United States. The amount of time, the commitment to resources, and the support of laws made the perseverance of Christianity within slavery made it impossible to overcome.

The search for evidence of how slaveholders, Christians who preferred slavery, and defenders of slavery utilized their interpretation of the Bible encompassed their desire to control. The desire to control others has been a human constraint that supersedes history's comprehension. This aspect should not be lost upon the remains of the remembrance of the past. The mystery that was portrayed of an ideal existence within the communities of slaves remains a reality foreign to those of us who reside outside of the period of slavery. The most terrible crimes were committed under the banner of bondage, with many of those guilty of ungodly behavior presenting a godly lifestyle. The double edge sword within the Bible speaks to how the careful manipulation of the holy writ has been reduced. The probable cause required to present charges upon the Proslavery Christians interpretation of the Bible sees the entire landscape of cruelty as a direct correlation to their desire to find the support of their abusive relationship.

The inability of the defenders of slavery to accurately assess the danger of freely allowing individuals to promote a version of Christianity that refused to embrace the tenants of universal freedoms cheapens their interpretation of the Bible. Guardians of slavey offered differing interpretations of the Bible bearing distinctive hallmarks of different perspectives with control as their main emphasis. Their rationalization of the Bible was deeply rooted in avoiding

the critical interpretation or explanation of important text within the word of God. The original and intended meaning of passages of scripture were utilized as evidence that slavery was a just cause. Language has a certain structure and follows certain rules, therefore, when the authors of the Bible penned their portions, the fact that human language is used to translate a Godly message, one must approach the content within the good book with the proper amount of care. The Bible must be interpreted in a manner consistent with the basic rules of language coupled with the clarity to comprehend its audiences and their differences within the evolution of life.

The Bible Allowed

Within the minds of Christians who championed slavery, the Bible allowed them to transform the meaning of words as they spoke to an audience that didn't share their level of education. When reading any documentation, we assume that the literal meaning of words is presented. However, within the exposition of the Bible, spiritual interpretation has been a religious practice that allows for a process of examination of a particular text of scripture to lead to different conclusions. This method of spiritualizing or allegorizing the Bible has assisted in the gravitational pull of Christianity, yet, within the period of slavery, the literal approach to interpreting the Bible was the norm. Nonetheless, Christians who embraced slavery saw fit to proclaim a justification disposition when contending that the Bible sanctioned slavery. They presented the Bible without including or stipulating the historical principle of how culture changes, points of view change, and most importantly language change from the time of the Bible. The interpretation of scripture demands placing it in its historical context, the consideration of geography, the customs, current events, and even the politics of the time when a passage was written impacts the true meaning of the words of the Bible.

Christianity in the hands of individual Christians who supported slavery with their interpretation of the Bible failed to examine a passage or verse concerning its immediate context as the best interpreter of demands deep investigation. The act of taking verses out of context and avoiding emphasizing the verses surrounding a particular verse while also disregarding the Bible produced another language. This language made for contradictions that tended to present God's word as a straight line with no room for errors or disobedience. Considering this, the defenders of slavery often cited verses of the Bible out of context and argued their points with a commitment to a rationale that reinforced slavery. Proper Biblical interpretation requires the reader of God's word to come to terms with the many variables of the Bible.

Reasonable theological statements and thoughts in one text of scripture can and should be harmonized with theological statements or thoughts in other parts of the Bible. Christians who welcomed slavery, often held captives at their mercy as they preferred to use the Bible as a weapon of oppression rather than use it as a sword of liberty. Within the exploration of the Bible, a deeper understanding of the biblical text in its historical context reveals the purpose of God's word. The Bible's intent was the elevation of humanity that places the proper emphasis on human equality. The attempts of these select Christians who favored slavery, often elected to direct society towards the preserving slavery as an Christian way of living with their interpretation of the Bible, which robbed God's word of its message of liberation in the hearts of enslaved Africans. Their modern perspective increasingly sought to deny rights and dignity to slaves, so equality was disparagingly utilized. Thus, in the hands of slaveholders and their allies, the Bible became an oppressive document that vindicated the institution of slavery.

Robert Karl Gnuse a historian who authored the book, *Trajectories of justice: What the Bible Says about Slaves, Women, and Homosexuality*, offers this observation:

Critical intelligentsia who so quickly condemn the Bible and its message fail to appreciate two important realities. First, the biblical texts were generated in the first millennium BCE (for the Old Testament) and in the first century CE (for the New Testament). They were products of an era in so many ways repressive, an age of patriarchalism and imperial oppression by military empires. The biblical texts cannot help but reflect the values of that age, especially when straightforward narratives describe the everyday happenings of life. If we desire to know the values and the beliefs of the biblical authors, we are best advised not to read the stories, which, of course, reflect the mores of the common society. Rather, we should turn our attention to the laws that the authors sought to impress upon society, to the prophetic oracles spoken by those critics of religious and social values, to the classical prophets, and the writings of the New Testament—especially Paul.¹

Consequently, the route in which the examination of the practices of pro-slavery Christians offers insight into how the Bible gave them authority to oppress, rape, murder, and alter the lives of their fellow man. The words of the Bible took on another meaning within the interpretations of defenders of slavery and shaped their core values. Within this system of oppression, the meaning of passages of scripture worked as themes to the lives of both the slaveholder and the slave. Life on plantations was an ecosystem to itself that demanded its own unique culture, philosophies, and values. The slaveholder's stress and interpretation of the Bible underscore how much their conceptual struggle with their free labor opponents shaped and informed their social thought, their politics, and their motivations.

Notwithstanding, the intellectual worlds of slaveholders or masters consisted of much more than their interpretation of the Bible. Their defense of slavery coupled with their commitment to capitalism expressed their views on other topics as well. Yet within the slave community, pro-slavery Christians articulated their interpretations of the Bible about slavery in ways that had a direct correlation to the struggle between slaves and a free society. Nonetheless, Southern masters found themselves engaged in a life-and-death struggle against hostile forces

¹ Robert Karl Gnuse, *In Trajectories of Justice: What the Bible Says about Slaves, Women, and Homosexuality*, 2.

that increasingly condemned the foundation of slave society as paternalism accelerated in part to counter the intensifying assault on the institution of slavery. The Presbyterian Reverend Charles Colcock Jones of Georgia, the leading exponent of missionary work among slaves, wrote a letter to his mother Mary Jones, conveying condolences for the death of one of their slaves.²

In this letter, the Reverend states: “There is much to be said, however, that with kind masters the orphans are always cared for, which is more than can be affirmed of many poor persons not occupying a similar relation in life. Their children are left to a public charity, which is too often meager and beggarly.”³ His stance speaks to the regard that slaveholders held towards their slaves as he referred to slaves as “orphans” while endorsing the “public charity” of slavery. Within these thoughts, the open ability to dress slavery up as a model for proper relations between races was a direct result of their interpretation of the Bible. Within their minds, their paternalism approach to slavery proved that Christianity was a fruitful component of slavery.

Exegesis and Eisegeses

The use of critical explanations and interpretation of a text or a portion of text within the Bible is known as exegesis, whereas when the interpreter presents his or her ideas, bias, or intentions of scripture as the interpretation of the Bible, rather than the actual meaning of the scripture, which is known as eisegeses. Therefore, when exploring the pro-slavery Christian disposition towards slavery, investigating the method in which scripture was utilized presents a layer of construction in which the house of the relationship between Christianity and slavery was established. Popular pseudoscientific theories were developed by the Southern states after the

² Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery In The Americas*, 547.

³ Charles Colcock Jones to Mary Jones, November 25, 1856, in Robert Manson Myers (ed.), *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven, 1972), 266.

European Enlightenment period and operated intending to provide viciously stereotypical denigrations of slaves that offered either a docile demeanor or an exaggeratedly romantic portrayal of slavery. Historians have noted that a key feature of the pro-slavery Christians' tendency was to utilize an ideology that was deeply rooted in paternalism. The propensity of slave owners to view their plantations as extended households spoke to their comprehension of the Bible. Considering themselves as benevolent fathers and mothers and their slaves as children, the need for this version of Christianity presented a morally defensible stance. A fundamental aspect of paternalism for the pro-slavery Christian emphasized the ideology of romantic archetypes that used the Bible as evidence. This dogmatic approach to understanding the Bible permitted pro-slavery Christians the ability to reckon with the South's peculiar institution. The exegesis of the word of God by pro-slavery Christians provides insight into their temperament towards slavery and its relationship to Christianity.

Presbyterian Eisegeses

With the completion of the Revolutionary War, the Presbyterian Church established a reputation in the United States as a frontrunner in the battle against the institution of slavery. In the examination of the history of the Presbyterian Church, scholars and historians have delivered several rewarding endorsements of their involvement in Antislavery thought. However, Jewel L. Spangler contends, "Antislavery thought and activity among southern Presbyterians, meantime, was minimal, while proslavery Christianity was developing rapidly."⁴ Which provides a different memory of the Presbyterian Church, especially within the confines of the Southern states where slavery operated. Others have argued that "Presbyterian ministers who did evangelize among the slaves took the position of other denominations in the British colonies that conversion to

⁴ Jewel L. Spangler, "Proslavery Presbyterians: Virginia's Conservative Dissenters in the Age of Revolution." *The Journal of Presbyterian History* (1997-) 78, no. 2 (2000): 111-23.

Christianity would not affect slave's status.”⁵ Nevertheless, Christians who supported slavery had an innate ability to make slavery appear morally acceptable within their elucidation of God's word.

During the Second Great Awakening period from 1800 to 1830, the abolitionist cause was confronted with a prolific number of proslavery advocates that utilized a revivalism doctrine to manipulate the understanding of the Bible. Presbyterian millennialism Southern preachers maintained that slavery was acceptable in the Bible and insisted that Jesus himself, compelled slaves to be “obedient to their master.” Dr. James H. Thornwell publish a sermon entitled “*The Rights and Duties of Masters*”, Thornwell played an important role in the Reactionary Enlightenment breakthrough in Southern Rightist thought as a Proslavery Christian, he was a Presbyterian theologian. Within this sermon, Reverend Thornwell offers a farsighted interpretation of the Bible as he uses its content to attack the abolitionist stance. This sermon was preached on Sunday evening, May 26, 1850, in Charleston, South Carolina, and the emphasis was that it was produced with “the Christian zeal of our community for the sound and thorough religious training of their slaves.”⁶

The eisegeses of his sermon provided a proslavery interpretation, within his sermon, Thornwell praised the congregation for creating a place of worship in which he states:

When the scheme was first projected, the opposition was very naturally excited to the separation of masters and servants in the solemn offices of religion, which its execution, to some extent, involved.⁷

⁵ Arvarh E. Strickland, Review of Presbyterians and the Nergo: A History. Civil War History 15, no. 2 (1969): 174-176.

⁶ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, iv.

⁷ Ibid., 6.

He reveals the intention of his sermon when he contends, “The slave-holding States of this confederacy have been placed under the ban of the publick opinion of the civilized world.”⁸ Insisting that, “The philanthropy of Christendom seems to have concentrated its sympathies upon us. We have been denounced, with every epithet of vituperation and abuse, as conspirators against the dignity of man—traitors to our race, and rebels against God.”⁹ To make certain no one missed his point, he explicitly linked the Northern religious group had, “aimed at stirring up insurrection in our midst.”¹⁰

He insists:

In the sacred names of religion and liberty, private efforts have been made to turn hearts of servants against their masters; and publick institutions, which the implied faith of the country should render only vehicles of convenience, have been treacherously converted into engines of sedition and organs of tumult.¹¹

He also challenged the moral view of the south with:

A spurious charity for a comparatively small class in the community, is dictating the subversion of the cherished institutions of our fathers, and the hopes of the human race—the utter ruin of this vast imperial Republick, is to be achieved as a trophy to the progress of human development.¹²

According to Thornwell, one of the motivational causes for the South’s defense of slavery was that “we were tempted to resort to measures of legislation, which, while they contribute nothing to our security, have given a pretext to the calumnies of our enemies, and embarrassed our defense in the hands of our friends.”¹³ Thornwell continued, “But I feel bound, in candor, to say, that, under the extraordinary pressure which has been upon us, it is a matter of

⁸ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

astonishment and devout thanksgiving to God, that we have been able, in the regulation of our domestick institutions, to preserve so much moderation, prudence, humanity, and caution.”¹⁴

Thornwell called upon their authority to explain:

To say that we have run into no extravagancies in our defense of slavery—that we have not, like all controvertists, been perplexed with the ambiguity of terms, and betrayed by rashness into untenable position, is to say that our excesses have not been greater and more disastrous.¹⁵

He went so far as to claim, “With infidelity in the one hand, suggesting a short reply to the indictment of the world, that our Negroes are not of the same blood with ourselves— a plea which, if it had been admitted, would have justly drawn the curse of God, as well as the execrations of the race; with the dictates of a narrow expediency on the other, suggesting that our safety depended upon the depression, and still lower degradation of the black race; with Seylla on the one side and Charybdis on the other, the wonder is, that we have not been frightened from our propriety, and driven to the adoption of more measures that would be seen to justify the censures of our enemies.”¹⁶

Thornwell maintained that slavery was an indispensable evil that must survive until the South’s civilization attained divine perfection in the second coming of Christ. He believed that converting slaves to Christianity represented the South’s fair treatment of slaves. Moving this argument further he contends:

We are not ashamed to call him brother.—The subjugation of the fears and jealousy which a systematic misrepresentation of religion, on the part of our inveterate opposers, has had a tendency to produce, is a publick declaration to the world, that, in our philosophy, right is the highest expediency, and obedience to God the firmest security of communities as well as individuals.¹⁷

¹⁴ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 9-10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

Nevertheless, with all of this interpreted goodwill, Thornwell referred to slaves as property as he insisted, “We have not sought the protection of our property in the debasement of our species; we have not maintained our own interests in this world, by the deliberate sacrifice of the eternal interests of the thousands who look to us for the way of salvation.”¹⁸ Thornwell attempts to dignify the institution of slavery by identifying the defense of slavery with a strategy that attacks different institutions such as the abolishment movement. Skillfully associating the feelings of the audience with a need to safeguard slavery against the principles which demand abolition, he championed the right to defend slavery, arguing:

Under the infallible conviction—infallible, because the offspring of the word of God—that he who walketh uprightly, walketh surely, we have endeavored to carry out a plan which shall have the effect of rendering to our servants, in the most comprehensive sense, that which is just and equal.¹⁹

He adds, “if others feel called to seduce them into grievous crime, and to ply them with instigations to insurrection and tumult, our firmest precautions against the threatened danger shall be the faithful discharge of our duties, which, while it preserves a conscience void of offense towards God, conciliates the confidence and affections of man.”²⁰ While suggesting that the South were victims of a plot to condemn their way of living, Thornwell proclaimed, “If God shall enable us to maintain the moderation and dignity which becomes us, and to set an example of faithfulness and diligence in the discharge of the duties which spring from the relation of master and servant, it will be an omen of good. It will be a signal proof that He has not

¹⁸ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

condemned us, and a cheering token that in the vicissitudes of human affairs, the truth will ultimately prevail, and we shall stand acquitted at the bar of the world.”²¹

Noticeable within his sermon, Thornwell takes steps to insert the word servant and not refer to African Americans as slaves. Within this approach, he was able to reinforce the Biblical language Southern clergymen interpreted the word of God to defend slavery as a right constituted by the laws of God. Thornwell argues:

The agitations which are convulsing the kingdoms of Europe—the mad speculations of philosophers—the excesses of unchecked democracy, are working out some of the most difficult problems of political and social science; and when the tumult shall have subsided and reason resumed her ascendancy, it will be found that the very principles upon which we have been accustomed to justify Southern slavery, are the principles of regulated liberty—that in defending this institution we have really been upholding the civil interests of mankind—resisting alike the social anarchy of communism and the political anarchy of licentiousness—that we have been supporting representative, republican government against the despotism of masses on the one hand, and the supremacy of a single will on the other.²²

Thornwell insists that slavery was an enterprise of heaven, stating, “God has not permitted such a remarkable phenomenon as the unanimity of the civilized world, in its execration of slavery, to take place without design.”²³ His understanding of the Bible and the institution of slavery leaves him to insist that the Abolitionist movement has constructed a war against the South. His rebuttal to liberty and freedom for the enslaved sees him contend, “This great battle with the Abolitionists, has not been fought in vain.”²⁴ He persists with, “The muster of such immense forces—the fury and bitterness of the conflict—the disparity in resources of the parties in the war—the conspicuousness—the unexampled conspicuousness of the event, have all been ordered for wise and beneficent results; and when the smoke shall have made in the

²¹ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

practical solution of the problems which produced the collision.”²⁵ Thornwell questions the intent of the Abolitionist movement, he argues, “Truth must triumph. God will; vindicate the appointments of His Providence—and if our institutions are indeed consistent with righteousness and truth, we can calmly afford to bide our time—we can watch the storm which is beating furiously against us, without terror or dismay—we can receive the assault of the civilized world—trusting in Him who has all the elements at His command and can save as easily by one as a thousand.”²⁶ His stance is reinforced with these remarks, “It is not the narrow question of abolitionism or slavery—not simply whether we shall emancipate our negroes or not; the real question is the relations of man to society—of States to the individual, and of the individual to States; a question as broad as the interests of the human race.”²⁷ Thornwell is resolved in his disposition as he contends:

These are the mighty questions which are shaking thrones to their centres—upheaving the masses like an earthquake, and rocking the solid pillars of this Union. The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders—they are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, Jacobins, on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other.²⁸

Sinking his teeth into the flesh of his prey, Thornwell argued:

In one word, the world is the battle ground—Christianity and Atheism the combatants; and the progress of humanity the stake. One party seems to regard Society, with all its complicated interests, its divisions, and sub-divisions, as the machinery of man which, as it has been invented and arranged by his ingenuity and skill, may be taken to pieces, reconstructed, altered, or repaired, as experience shall indicate defects of con-scheme, whose beginnings must be traced to the unfathomable depths of the past, and whose development and completion must be sought in the still more unfathomable depths of the future – a scheme, as Butler expresses it, “not fixed, but progressive—every way incomprehensible” —in which, consequently, irregularity is the confession of our

²⁵ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

ignorance—disorder the proof of our blindness, and with which it is as awful temerity to tamper as to sport with the name of God.”²⁹

Ultimately, Thornwell asserts:

The Apostle briefly sums up all that is incumbent, at the present crisis, upon the slaveholders of the South, in the words of the text—Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven. It would be useless waste of time to spend many words in proving, that the servants contemplated by the Apostle were slaves. Finding it impossible to deny that slavery, as an existing element of society, is actually sanctioned by Christ and His Apostles, those who would preserve some show of consistency in their veneration of the Scripture, and their condemnation of us, resolve the conduct of the founders of Christianity into motives of prudence and considerations of policy.³⁰

He continues, “While they admit that the letter of the Scriptures is distinctly and unambiguously in our favor, they maintain that their spirit is against us and that our Savior was content to leave the destruction of whatsoever was morally wrong in the social fabric, to the slow progress of changes in individual opinions, wrought by the silent influence of religion, rather than endanger the stability of governments by sudden and disastrous revolutions.”³¹ Adding, “The Apostle does not,” says a learned commentator, interfere with any established relations, however, as in the case of slavery, morally and politically wrong—but only enjoins the discharge of the duties which the very persons themselves recognize.” It is not for me to explain how imputation of a defective morality can be reconciled with the great Protestant dogma, that the Bible is an adequate rule of faith and practice; or upon what principles, slaveholders should be rejected from the fellowship of the Christian Church now, when Paul received them as brethren and sanctioned the bondage in which they held their servants.”³²

²⁹ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15-16

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

³² *Ibid.*, 16.

Within Thornwell's sermon, he decided to employ an eisegeses interpretation of scripture to provide reassurance to himself and his audience, by expressing his ideas or bias believes in slavery he presents a picture of slavery that is easy to digest. This approach became a reoccurring theme that Southern leaders embraced. In 1837, John C. Calhoun, (1782-1850) a South Carolina Senator was confronted with an antislavery petition delivered to the Senate. Contradictory to most of the previous southern politicians to this point, Calhoun's disposition insisted that white southerners needed to stop apologizing for slavery. He proclaimed, "Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually."³³ These interpretations of slavery were impacted by a desire to present the institution of slavery as a natural, just, and the progressive entity that moves heathens into a better lifestyle. Incredibly, the moral defense of slavery by defenders of slavery often failed to speak on or condemn slave masters' tendency to fornicate with their property, which was a sin. Nor did they mention how in many cases this fornication was actually forcible rape, and that the byproduct of this event often produced children who did not inherit any of their white fathers' rights.

Nevertheless, Thornwell did not in any shape or form represent the disposition of the entire domination of Presbyterians, however, his perspective was not one of singularity. His insistence on the obedience of slaves was a stance that Proslavery Christians united upon. In fact, on page 21 of his sermon, he provides his most biased eisegeses of the bible stating, "The apostle not merely recognizes the moral agency of slaves, in the phraseology which he uses, but treats them as possessed of conscience, reason, and will—by the motives which he presses. He says to

³³ John C. Calhoun, "Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions, Delivered in the Senate, February 6th, 1837," in Richard R. Cralle, ed., *Speeches of John C. Calhoun, Delivered in the House of Representative and in the Senate of the United States* (New D. Appleton, 1853), 625-33.

them in effect that their services to their masters are duties which they owe to God—that a moral character attaches to their works, and that they are the subjects of praise or blame according to the principles upon which their obedience is rendered.”³⁴ This perspective was a common way of thinking for Christians who favored slavery,” they held firm to the obedience of their slaves and spoke of the blessings within slavery as a method of control.

Thornwell provides further evidence for his cause, stating, “The blind passivity of a corpse, or the mechanical subserviency of a tool,” which Dr. Channing, and Prof. Whewell regard as constituting the very essence of every system of slavery—precluding as it does every idea of merit or demerit, of approbation or of censure, never seems to have entered the head of the Apostle. He considered slavery as a social and political economy, in which relations subsisted betwixt moral, intelligent, responsible beings, involving reciprocal rights and reciprocal obligations. There was a right to command on the one hand—an obligation to obey on the other. Both parties might be guilty of injustice and if the wrong—the master might prostitute his power by tyranny, cruelty, and iniquitous exactions—the servant might evade his duty from indolence, treachery, or obstinate self-will. Religion held the scales of justice between them and enforced fidelity upon each by the awful sanctions of eternity. This was the aspect in which the Apostle contemplated the subject.”³⁵

Thus, the comparisons of infractions of sins on the part of the slave master and the slave coupled with the viewpoint of other scholarly defenders of slavery provided an eisegesis of the scripture that worked to enhance the justification of slavery by insisting that the Bible sanctioned slavery for eternity. Equally, Thornwell argues:

³⁴ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

The Providence of God marks out for the slave the precise services, in the lawful commands of the master, which it is the Divine will that he should render; the painful necessities of his case are often as stringent upon the free labourer, and determine, with as stern a mandate, what contracts he shall make. Neither can he be said to select his employments. God allots to each his portion—places one immediately under command—and leaves the other not infrequently a petitioner for a master.³⁶

Additionally, he reasons,

Whatever control the master has over the person of the slave, is subsidiary to this right to his labour; what he sells is not the man, but the property in his services—true he chastises the man, but the punishments inflicted for disobedience are no more inconsistent with personal responsibilities than the punishments inflicted by the law for breaches of contract.³⁷

With his eyes on the Bible, he continues:

On the contrary, punishment in contradistinction from suffering, always implies responsibility, and a right which cannot be enforced, is a right, which society, as an organized community, has not yet acknowledged. The chastisements of slaves are accordingly no more entitled to awaken the indignation of loyal and faithful citizens—however pretended philanthropists may describe the horrors of the scourge and the lash—than the penalties of disgrace, imprisonment, or death, which all nations have inflicted upon crimes against the State. All that is necessary in any case, is that the punishment should be *just*. Pain unrighteously inflicted is cruelty—whether that cruelty springs from the tyranny of a single master, or the tyranny of that greater master, the State. Whether adequate provisions shall be made to protect the slave from inhumanity and oppression—whether he shall be exempt from suffering except for disobedience and for crime, are questions to be decided by the law of the land; and in this matter the codes of different nations, and of the same nation at different times, have been various.³⁸

Baptist Eisegeses

The argument for slavery was not restricted to the Presbyterian domination, by the 1830s conflicts had begun to mount between northern and southern Baptist churches. Economic and social reasons by southern Baptist churches stood as motives for the defense of slavery, and among their arsenal was the use of the Bible. The South claimed that slavery was beneficial and

³⁶ James Henley Thornwell. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*, 25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

endorsed in the Bible by God, with which Baptists in the North disagreed. Eventually, a break occurred in 1844 between the northern and southern Baptist churches when the *Home Mission Society* declared that a person could not be a slaveowner and a missionary.³⁹ Richard Fuller was a Baptist pastor who utilized the Bible to defend the institution of slavery as well. He was raised Episcopalian and graduated from Harvard in 1824 with a law degree. He pastored churches in Beaufort, South Carolina, and Baltimore, Maryland. The book *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*, which he co-wrote with Brown University president Francis Wayland in 1847 provided different interpretations of the Bible. Wayland argued that slavery was a sin, yet Fuller disagreed. In their correspondence to one another, Fuller asserts:

My chief hope for the Union is in the conservative power of religion, and the day is not far when that power will be required in all its stringency. Look at the distracted condition of this land; reflect on the appalling character of a civil war; and if you love the country, or the slave, do not sever the bands which unite the Baptist churches.”⁴⁰ Thus, within his disposition, Fuller contends that love for one’s country should supersede any love that one would have for a slave. He confronts an area of pride for Americans at this time as operates to solicit sympathy for his stance rather than provide evidence. He continues, “Compared with slavery, all other topics which now shake and inflame men’s passions in these United States, are really trifling. They are only bonfires; but Ucalegon burns next, and in that quarter God forbid that Christians should throw the first torches.”⁴¹

Offering his perspective, Fuller dismisses slavery as a sin, “If, however, slavery be a sin, surely it is the immediate duty of masters to abolish it, whatever be the result—this you urge, and this I grant; and this brings me to the single matter in hand, on which I submit to you the following observations.”⁴² Returning to the Bible, Fuller argues:

1st. In affirming what you do, ought it not to give a pious mind pause, that you are brought into direct conflict with the Bible? The Old Testament did sanction slavery. God said, “Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the

³⁹ Glen Jeansonne, “Southern Baptist Attitudes Toward Slavery, 1845-1861.” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1971): 510-22.

⁴⁰ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be in your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever.⁴³

He adds:

And in the Gospels and Epistles, the institution is, to say the least tolerated.”⁴⁴ Therefore, in principle, Fuller contends that slavery is not sinful, and he undergirds this position with his interpretation of the Bible. He argues that these passages sanction slavery and that the Bible has not identified slavery as a sin, which the Bible alone has the right to do so. The type of slavery within the Bible differed considerably from the version of slavery that the South employed, to which Fuller contends, “I do not now inquire as to the character of this slavery, nor is it important, for you pronounce slaveholding itself a sin; a sin, therefore, *semper et ubique*, always, and everywhere, and in all shapes.”⁴⁵

Accomplishing his goal of recognizing the supremacy of the Bible, his comprehension of the Bible in defense of slavery sees his observation:

I, for my part, have no difficulty, and am in no sort of dilemma here, for I find my Bible condemning the abuses of slavery, but permitting the system itself, in cases where its abrogation would be a greater calamity than its existence. But you—how do you escape the charge of impiety?⁴⁶

Answering his question, to his delight, Fuller continues:

In the remark just made, I supposed, of course, that you admit some sort of slavery to have been allowed in the Old Testament, and suffered by Jesus and his apostles.”⁴⁷ Within these perspectives, Fuller aligns his stance as one that Proslavery Christians” utilized, providing the contents of the Bible as evidence of their justification of slavery, adding, “A man who denies this will deny any thing, and only proves how much stronger a passion is than the clearest truth. Both Dr. Channing and Dr. Wayland, with all respectable commentators, yield to this point; but if this point be yielded, how can it be maintained that slaveholding is itself a crime? No one can regard the noble president of Brown University with more esteem and affection than I do; from his arguments, however, I am constrained to dissent.”⁴⁸

⁴³ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

Dissenting would be tacit that the South would result within the confines of history. Nonetheless, the direction of Fuller's interpretation of the Bible provides the measure of insight needed to see the destination of his stance. Fuller insisted that Rev. Wayland's position consists of him admitting that, "the moral precepts of the gospel condemn slavery; it is therefore criminal. Yet he admits that neither the Savior nor his apostles commanded masters to emancipate their slaves; nay, they "go further,' he adds, "and prescribe the duties suited to both parties in their present condition;" among which duties, be it remembered, there is not an intimation of manumission, but the whole code contemplates the continuance of the relation. Here, then, we have the Author of the gospel, and the inspired propagators of the gospel, and the Holy Script inditing the gospel, all conniving at a practice which was a violation of the entire moral principle of the gospel!"⁴⁹

Thus, in no way, shape, or form is the interpretation of Rev. Fuller's views and thoughts a reflection of the entire Baptist domination, nonetheless, his point of view was a shared assessment of many of his colleagues. Fuller asserts:

They who proclaimed and prosecuted a war of extermination against all the most cherished passions of this guilty earth, and attached with dauntless intrepidity all the multiform idolatry around them—they quailed, they shrank from breathing even a whisper against slavery, through fear of consequences!! And, through fear of consequences, the Holy Spirit has given us a canon of Scriptures, containing minute directions as to the duties of master and slave, without a word as to emancipation!!! Suppose our missionaries should be detected this winking a idolatry, and tampering with crime in heathen lands.⁵⁰

Rev. Fuller was an owner of slaves, and his interpretation of the Bible saw him insisting:

But will it not be laboring in vocation of the infidel, to assert that the Bible does not condemn slavery, especially when we know that in the times of the Apostles, masters were allowed to torture their slaves, and starve them, and kill them as food for their fish?

⁴⁹ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 4-5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

Is it not an insult to heaven, for one to defend such a system out of the Scripture? The question is very plausible; but the answer is soon given, and it is the same which has been repeated over and over, viz., that the enormities often resulting from slavery, and which excite out abhorrence, are not inseparable from it—they are not elements in the system, but abuses of it.”⁵¹ His definition of slavery, he argued, was one that he quoted, “What, indeed, is slavery? ‘I define slavery,’ says Paley, “*to be an obligation to labor for the benefit of the master, without the contract or consent of the slave.*”⁵²

Slavery was a part of Christianity, and the social organizations that were involved in the maneuvering of slave systems were not limited to those outside of the four walls of the Church. The instructions provided for the governing of those under bondage with little to no examination of the right to freedom in the minds of Southerners who were deeply impacted by the institution. Fuller thus concluded that the abovementioned definition of slavery presents little room for considering the institution as a sin:

This is all that enters into the definition of slavery, and now what ingredient here is sinful? Suppose a master to “render into his servant the things that are just and equal;” suppose the servant well clothed and religiously instructed, and to receive a fair reward for labor in modes of compensation best suited to his condition; might not the bible permit the relation to continue, and might it not be best for the slave himself? Recollect that when you tell is of certain laws, and customs, and moral evils, and gross crimes, which are often incidents of slavery in this country, we argue with you, and are most anxious for their removal, and deprecate the incendiary movements of abolitionists as tending only to retard and even arrest our success.”⁵³

Promoting his understanding of the Bible, he instructs the need for Christians to pray without the assistance of abolitionists as he concludes, “On these topics, Christians throughout the land ought to communicate in the spirit of love and combine their prayers and co-operations. The abolitionists, however, are not among those with whom we can thus associate.”⁵⁴ He sees their opposition as not just a threat to slavery but to the progress of Christianity, insisting:

⁵¹ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 7.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

They occupy a position hostile alike to us, and the word of God, and to every principle of charity. They do not attack the accidents of slavery, and attempt to show that they are essentials, but slavery itself they stigmatize as an unutterable crime, and slaveholders as on a footing with thieves and pirates.⁵⁵

He defends slavery and condemns cruelty, arguing, “Is it to be expected that such libels will convince persons here, or that hard words will commend anybody as wiser and more courageous and better than the Savior and his apostles? Examine all the anti-slavery publications, and what do they contain? Denude them of bold assertion and unmeasured invective against the accessories of slavery, and what is left? The simple question is, *whether it is necessarily, and amidst all circumstances, a crime to hold men in a condition where they labor for another without their consent or contract?* And in settling this matter all impertinences must be retrenched. But, if impertinences be removed, what remains in the abolition treatises? For example, slavery in these States may or may not be different from that mentioned in the Bible, and this may be a very important inquiry; but it is not the inquiry before us. So, concerning the cruelty too often practiced by unprincipled men; here is guilt, guilt punishable by our laws, and which should exclude such persons from Christian fellowship; the crime, however, is not slaveholding, but cruelty.”⁵⁶

Rev. Fuller's interpretation of the Bible, like many of his contemporaries, was motivated by justifying an institution that utilized sin to maintain its operation. The disease of interpretation apprehended his ability to distinguish between the Bible's regulation of slavery from the approval of slavery, comparing slavery to fatherhood, or the relationship between a citizen and the government, he asserts, “Property in a slave is only a right to his service without his consent or contract; and if this be necessarily criminal, then the authority of a father over his child, and of

⁵⁵ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

a government over its citizens, must be criminal too.”⁵⁷ He fails to point out that within the scope of the Bible, God is moved by the cries of his people in bondage and moves to deliver them to freedom. He fails to rationalize that the Old Testament saints might have practice slavery, they couldn’t purchase their pagan neighbors and force them to travel the middle passages. He fails to speak to the reality that under the new covenant, we all are under grace, which means that in Jesus Christ there is neither slave nor free. These facts are ignored, neglected, or altogether overlooked to suggest that the Bible extended slavery well past the life of Jesus. The Bible displays the love of Christ and his resurrection as the ax to the root of all sin. Within the confines of the Bible, the most common form of slavery in Judah at the time was “household” slaves. Therefore, in many of his teachings and parables, Jesus acknowledges slavery but does not condemn its existence. The reality of slavery within the Bible not causing societal unrest is due largely to the fact their system of slavery was absent of the “Western” perspective that we have inherited over two millennia. Slavery was not expressly denounced by the Apostles once the gospel was preached to the Gentiles as mixed churches were established and the goal of the early church was bringing these groups to salvation.

On another note, the social system of slavery within the Bible was passing away, the Apostle Paul encourages slaves and masters to relate to one another in 1 Corinthians 7:21-22, Ephesians 6:8, and Colossians 3:22; 4:1. Therefore, promoting social reform for an evil system that was already in decline took a backseat to preach the gospel of salvation to both the slave and those who were free. Others have evaluated the disposition of the men and women who supported slavery while preclaiming to be Christians as well as gathered information to assess the impact of Christianity within the British colonies and provide insight into such discoveries.

⁵⁷ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 9.

The appearance of new concepts of religious influence and the meaning of the transfer of information from pro-slavery Christians to slaves became critical factors in the direction of a Christian nation. As such, Robert L Paquette and Mark M. Smith concluded:

In 1830 the slaves of the British colonies and former British colonies in the Americas constituted the largest population of African Protestants in the world. How this transformation—from African traditionalists to Protestants—happened has been the subject of intense study. Most scholars agree that several developments contributed to the conversion of African and African-American slaves to Protestantism. First, a growing creole (native-born) population, especially in North America, lowered linguistic barriers between slaves and white missionaries. More important, these missionaries increasingly came from evangelical sects and denominations, especially Methodists and Baptists, along with some Presbyterians and evangelical Anglicans such as George Whitefield. These evangelical Protestants promulgated “a powerful integrating ideology and an ethos whose emphasis on spiritual equality had the potential for creating the first distinctive changes in African values in relation to Protestant Christianity.” Unlike Anglicans, evangelicals de-emphasized formal, literate catechesis in favor of oral communications and a profound, transforming experience of the Spirit.⁵⁸

These academic conclusions provided substantiation to the way the evolution of Christianity to hold, and influence dictated the interpretation of the Bible. Mark A. Noll approaches the historical criticism of scripture with these thoughts:

If general notions about science and evolution affected America’s traditional higher education, specific proposals concerning the Bible seem even more revolutionary. Much of the advanced scholarship from the Continent toward the end of the century seemed to undermine the hereditary confidence most American Christians had placed in the truthfulness of Scripture. American Protestants had long been notorious for their inability to interpret the Bible in anything like a harmonious fashion, but before the 1870s only a very few believers of any sort had doubted the fact that, however, interpreted, the Bible was true in largely commonsensical ways. A rapid increase in knowledge about the ancient world was one of the factors that led some scholars to consider Christianity as merely one of the many similar religions of the ancient Near East. If other cultures had their stories about great floods or the appearance of gods on earth, why should Christianity be considered unique? An increased willingness to regard historical writing as a product of the historians’ worldviews and habits of mind as well as of the actual events reported led other academics to question some or all of the miracle stories in the Bible.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, 384.

⁵⁹ Mark A. Noll, *A history of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 304.

Other Arguments

Popular arguments aroused when the interpretation of the Bible came from the lens of defenders of slavery. The immoral consideration of slavery was met with responses of Jesus not condemning slavery within the New Testament. During the time of the Son of God walking among his followers, slavery and servitude were mentioned in this period, but never directly addressed by Jesus. Therefore, as history has shown that Roman slavery was popular during this time, slaveholders openly defended their right to hold slaves in bondage. Those who own slaves would not believe that they would not only be permitted to enter the kingdom of heaven but that they would be embraced as doing the will of God. Pro-slavery Christians interpreted that since there was not a clear distinction between slavery being immoral then paradise or heaven was absolute. These interpretations also saw their view on Biblical men's actions as clues into what they could do and what they could not do as Christian slave owners. The argument against slavery came from those whose interpretation of the Bible saw slavery as an ungodly institution.

To compel and communicate to Rev. Fuller that slavery was not a humane practice, Dr. Wayland asserts:

My Dear Brother—

In my last two letters I have attempted to show what I mean when I assert that slavery is a moral evil. I have wished to make it clear that slavery, or the holding of men in bondage, and “obliging them to labor for our benefit, without their contract or consent,” is always and everywhere, not, as you well express it, *semper et ubique*, a moral wrong, a violation of the obligations under which we are created to our fellow-man, and a transgression of the law of our Creator, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*; that the guilt of any individual doing this wrong may be modified by his means of obtaining a knowledge of his duty, and also by the laws of the community of which he may chance to be a member.⁶⁰

He continues:

⁶⁰ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, R.I.*, 5th ed. New York: L. Colby, 1847, 48.

The objection to this view of the subject is founded on the precept and example of the Old and New Testaments. With pleasure I proceed to consider the argument on this part of the question. Believing as we both do that the Bible is a perfect rule of duty, if we can ascertain what it teaches, we may reasonably hope that our opinions may yet coincide. In this letter I propose to examine the argument derived from the Old Testament alone.⁶¹

Dr. Wayland also insists that:

Your view, I think, may be briefly expressed as follows: Slavery was sanctioned in the Old Testament; and, since the Old Testament is a revelation from God, and since He would not sanction say thing morally evil, therefore slavery is not a moral evil. Before, however, I proceed to consider this argument, permit me to remark, that I do not perceive in the views which I have expressed any thing at variance with the teachings of the Old Testament, I will briefly explain my opinions on the subject:

I grant, at once, that the Hebrews held slaves from the time of the conquest of Canaan, and that Abraham and the patriarchs had held them many centuries before. I grant also that Moses enacted laws with special reference to that relation. Of the nature of these laws it may be convenient to speak shortly. I wonder that any one should have had the hardihood to deny the delivery of the ten commandments to Moses.

Granting all this, I do not see that it contradicts aught that I have said, I believe slavery then, as now, to have been wrong, a violation of our obligations to man, and at variance with the moral laws of God. But I believe that God did not see fit to reveal his will on this subject, nor indeed on many others, to the ancient Hebrews. He made known to them just as much of his moral law as he chose, and the law on this subject belonged to the part which he did not choose to make known, Hence, although they did what was in itself *wrong*, yet, God not having made known to them his will, they were not *guilty*.⁶²

Dr. Wayland shows that the universal dimensions of every human act cannot be discovered within the Bible. And because of this, the ethical discipline of properly interpreting the word of God requires careful discernment and wholesome conduct as necessities. The Bible sees ethics-centered patience, fortitude, forbearance, sympathy, concern, and compassion. In his response to Rev. Fuller, Dr. Wayland stated:

God saw fit to institute peculiar relations between the Hebrews and the inhabitants of Canaan, relations such as he has never instituted between any other portions of the human family. When the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, God gave them and their lands and

⁶¹ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence*, 49.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 49-50.

possessions, by *special revelation*, to the Hebrews. The Hebrews were authorized by *divine commission* to invade their territory, to take possession of their houses and fields, and slay without mercy the inhabitants. The limitation and extent of this grant were definitely marked out. They were, however, directed to pause before the work of destruction was fully completed. Lest the land, being deserted of its inhabitants, should be overrun by beasts of prey. Still, the people within these limits remained under the primitive curse. The Hebrews were authorized to destroy them, and seize upon their land whenever they needed it. The authority to take them as slaves seems to me to be a part of this original. Peculiar, and I may perhaps say anomalous grant.

But this grant was made to one people, and to one people only, *the Hebrews*. It *had respect to one people one*, the Canaanites. It can be of force at no other time, and to no other people.⁶³

The realistic disposition has basic concepts of a mystical separation from the practical interpretation of the Bible and the general philosophy held by pro-slavery Christians stood on the premise of the Bible sanctioning slavery. Dr. Wayland states:

I believe that in these words I express the argument correctly. If I do not, it is solely because I do not know how to state it more exactly. Let us, then, in the first place, examine the major premise. "Whatever God sanctioned among the Hebrews, he sanctions for all men and at all times." Now this proposition surely is not self-evident. It be true, it must be provable either by reason, or by revelation. Can it be proved by reason? The only argument by which it could be supposed is, I think, the following:

1. Whatever God sanctions to any men at any time he sanctions to all men at all times.
2. The Hebrews are men. Therefore,
3. Whatever he sanctioned to the Hebrews at any time be sanctioned to the Hebrews at any time he sanctioned to all men at all times.

Now I think that the major premise of this syllogism is wholly untenable. It appears to me to be diametrically at variance with the whole theory of the divine dispensation. Every one, I think, knows that God has seen fit to enlighten our race progressively; and that he has enlightened different portions in different degrees. He has first given us the light of nature. Millions at the present day have no other light. We know from revelation that by the truth alone which this light reveals, will they be judged. They will therefore be held guilty for the transgression of moral law will not be laid to their account. Thus in this sense of the word, these transgressions are sanctioned to them; that is. They are not forbidden, and they are not forbidden, and they are not reckoned against them as sin.⁶⁴

⁶³ Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, R.I.*, 5th ed. New York: L. Colby, 1847, 50.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

Within another vein, the book written in 1847, *Christianity and slavery: a review of the correspondence between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, South Carolina, and Francis Wayland, D.D., of Providence, Rhode Island: on domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution*, this assessment of Christianity reached:

In speaking thus, we are far from denouncing, indiscriminately, all those who stand in the legal relation of slave-holders, as unworthy of being regarded as Christian brethren; for a man may hold this relation, in a legal sense, against his own consent. He may deem himself the victim of misfortune; he may feel bound to avail himself of his legal power, for the protection of his brethren; and especially he may, before God, as a Christian man, abjure all right and title to his fellow-men as property. Such a man, though nominally master of a thousand slaves, is more truly a philanthropist, and more worthy the fellowship of the universal church, than is the Northern Christian who never saw a slave, and still declares that Christianity sanctions slavery. The former is a slaveholder in name, but not in truth and in spirit; the latter is called a non-slaveholder, but a change of residence would make him an owner of men and women, and he is now a slaveholder in principle, in feeling, and in guiltiness. The author of the Sermon on the Mount assures us, that God judges men, not merely according to their overt acts, but according to the intents of their hearts,—the objects of their approval or abhorrence.⁶⁵

The interpretation of the Bible derives, roughly, from this review of this notable book between Rev. Fuller and Dr. Wayland, as the author William Hague presents a profound assessment of the correspondence between the two men and their differing interpretations of the Bible. The immense importance of Hague's review allows clarity into the power and authority of the interpretation of the Bible, especially when considering the human mind in determining how Christianity and slavery were coexisting at the time. Within his observations of the two men's letters, Hague claimed that how we experience life is conditioned on certain facts, thus, the individual who partakes in slaveholding shouldn't be cast aside. This rationale doesn't see the transcendentalist of the relationship between slavery and Christianity in Fuller's and Wayland's work, even though Hague came to disagree sharply with them on several issues, including their

⁶⁵ William Hague, Francis Wayland, and Richard Fuller, *Christianity and slavery: a review of the correspondence between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, R.I., on domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution*, 8-9.

interpretation of the Bible. In many ways, Hague's practicality towards Dr. Wayland's stance aligned him as a scholar ready to wear the mantle of an anti-slavery Christian. He continues:

Hence we have been deeply interested in the argument contained in these letters, conducted by an leading writer of the South and another of the North. Not being of those who would say, "This discussion belongs to the realm of abstractions; it is better to let it alone, and to deal only with facts:" we deem the discussion itself as a fact of the highest moment. For ourselves, we have not been aware, till recently, how extensively the opinion by Dr. Fuller prevails among Southern Christians,—how far they have departed from the purer doctrines of their fathers. We supposed that, to an wider extent than seems now to be the case, they had agreed with is in believing that Christianity entirely condemns the slave system; and that in proportion as their influence in the state was increasing, the day of emancipation was hastening on. We had often thought of them, as lacking proper degree of zeal in the work; as being timid and tardy, and too subservient to the schemes of worldly politicians; but we had never believed them so generally to have embraced an corrupt doctrine, to have perverted the high principles of Christianity, and to have been pressing into the support of slavery an religion which came into the world "to comfort the broken-hearted, to lift to those who were bowed down, to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free."⁶⁶

Hague stood with the ideals of Dr. Wayland and he did not share the religious bent of Dr. Fuller's circle. He disputed the notion that Christianity sanctioned slavery and did not agree with the contention of pro-slavery Christians that practiced dominion over slaves. He believed that Dr. Fuller's and those who shared his stance utilized scripture in a way that was unreliable as evidence. Hague took the transcendentalist of Christianity as proof of the need to offer freedom to all men. Hague continues:

While there are many things in these letters incidentally thrown out on both sides, which may be worthy of notice at some time, we wish now to consider the main question proposed, and the way in which it is treated.

The main question is, Does Christianity sanction slavery? Dr. Fuller asserts the affirmative in the clearest terms. He says: "I find my Bible condemning the abuses of slavery, but permitting the system itself." Page 4.

⁶⁶ William Hague, Francis Wayland, and Richard Fuller, *Christianity and slavery: a review of the correspondence between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, Rhode Island: on domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution*, 9-10.

“The matter stands thus: the Bible did authorize some sort of slavery; if now the abuses admitted and deplored by me be essentials of all slavery, then the Bible did allow those abuses.” Page 10.

“Slavery was everywhere a part of the social organization of the earth; and slaves and their masters were members together of the churches; and minute instructions are given to each as to their duties, without even an insinuation that it was the duty of masters to emancipate. Now I ask, could this possibly be so, if slavery were a ‘heinous sin’? No! every candid man will answer no!” Page 12.

“I put it to any one whether the precepts to masters, enjoining of course their whole duty, and not requiring, not exhorting them to emancipate their slaves, are not conclusive proof that the apostles did not consider (and as a New Testament precept is for all ages, that no one is now justified in denouncing) slave-holding as a sin.” Page 194.

From these citations it is evident, that the argument of Dr. Fuller, as the teaching of the New Testament, rests on two points:

1. The fact that the relation of master and slave was recognized throughout the civilized world, by the law of the Roman empire,
2. The silence of the New Testament as to the duty of dissolving that relation.

This argument has respect, *necessary*, to the slave system recognized by Roman law, which was then so extensively supreme, because there is no evidence that our Savior or the apostles ever came in contact with slavery under the Jewish law. Among the people of Palestine, involuntary servitude has been brought to an end, hundreds of years before the Christian era, by the natural operation of the code of Moses. Every slave bought of the heathen received the offer of freedom at the end of every seventh year, if he were an Jewish proselyte; and whether he were an Jewish proselyte or not, the jubilee trumpet sounded forth the decree of liberty at the close of every half century.⁶⁷

Hague’s sensible side is nowhere more evident in his assessment of Dr. Fuller’s rationale, exploring what was practical about slavery within the Bible allowed him to disprove the dispositions held by defenders of slavery. What was so valuable about disproving the rationale of pro-slavery Christians? Well, on the surface, Hague’s observations held in common the thoughts and beliefs of Dr. Wayland. Hague was not content to merely muse about the truths of slavery and Christianity within the slave community. He set out to examine and experience the world as

⁶⁷ William Hague, Francis Wayland, and Richard Fuller, *Christianity and slavery: a review of the correspondence between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, Rhode Island: on domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution*, 10-11.

a pro-slavery Christian closely as possible, to get his hands on the tendency of Dr. Fuller and his interpretation of the Bible as he asserts:

The passage quoted by Dr. Fuller, from the xxv. Chapter of Leviticus, which forbids the purchase of bondmen from any except the heathen and strangers, saying: "Of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids, and ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: they shall be your bondmen for ever;" must be understood, in consistency with the law of the jubilee, which had been laid down in an preceding part of that same chapter, which says: "Thou shalt cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound, on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of *atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land; and ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF*: it shall be an jubilee unto you: and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and every man unto his family." Such was the law of jubilee; limiting the sales of men, as it did the sales of land, whereof it said: "According to the multitude of years after the jubilee, thou shalt buy of thy neighbor; according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it:" when, therefore, another law enacts that bondmen shall be purchased of the children of the heathen, instead of the children of Israel, it must be understood that the purchase is modified by the previous law, and that the meaning of the latter statute is not the entail of perpetual slavery on any class, but simply the confining of the Jews in the purchase of servants, always and for ever, to the children of the heathen.

If there were any doubt on *this point*, our interpretation of the meaning of the law would be confirmed by considering the fact, that the inspired prophets treated the continuance of slavery as inconsistent with the spirit of the Mosaic precepts. In saying this, however, we do not mean to *intimate that they ever* had occasion to denounce any kind of oppression possessing the character of American slavery; for nothing like that could have existed a single day in Palestine after entrance of the Israelites. American slavery originated in kidnapping men and women from Africa; but this was the only kind of *theft* which the law of Moses made a capital crime. "He that stealth a man, and selleth him, or if he be *found in his hand*, he shall surely be put to death" (Ex. xxi. 16). The man-stealer, and the man-seller, and the slaveholder, were alike liable to capital punishment. The Mosaic law would have always prevented the slavery of the United States, and would destroy it instantly now, if put in operation. In Palestine war, debt, poverty, and voluntary contract, originated, at different periods, an servitude of which was provided for by law. Against this abolition, avarice would naturally revolt, and seek to evade the law for the sake of gain.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ William Hague, Francis Wayland, and Richard Fuller, *Christianity and slavery: a review of the correspondence between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, S. C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, Rhode Island: on domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution*, 11-12.

This stance is closest to what is typically considered anti-slavery Christian's core beliefs, the emphasis placed on the ethics of slavery looks at the common good that the Bible speaks upon. Christians that promoted communitarian ethics expressed their communal concern in different ways. Hague stressed the intent of the Bible within the Mosaic law as he breaks down the accurate interpretation of the Bible. The tenets of the Mosaic Law stipulated several significant instructions, the irony in Dr. Fuller's use of these laws is that the Israelites received these commands after being freed of 400 years of bondage themselves. According to the Old Testament, the Law began with the Ten Commandments and included the many rules of religious observance given in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. The Pentateuch documents the exodus of the Israelites and their 40-year journey to Canaan. Nevertheless, pro-slavery Christians fully embraced the method of justifying the aspects of the Bible in attempts of reducing the rights of slaves and championing the rights of slaveholders.

In the Mosaic law, God begins with an ancient people who have imbibed dehumanizing customs and social structures, yet the God of the Bible seeks to draw them in and show them a better way. This portion of the story must have been lost in the assessments of the Bible by defenders of slavery. Hague accurately points out that slavery according to the Mosaic law came with a limitation on the time one who be a slave. Any slave within the Israelite community would only serve in this capacity for six years and the seventh year or the year of completion, the slave would gain his or her freedom. This fact highlights the inconsistent nature of pro-slavery Christian's interpretation of the Bible, for instance, the slavery of the Bible also consisted of providing options for slaves who desired to remain in slavery. Another difference in the slavery of the Bible can be seen in the protection that the laws provided female slaves. In Exodus 21:7-11, the Bible places limitations on a man purchasing a female slave and states that a man must

marry a female slave or give her to his son to marry. This was in complete opposition to the version of slavery that existed in America.

Slavery within the Bible resulted from poverty or theft, pro-slavery Christians refused to acknowledge that the Old Testament slavery law was more humane than the version of slavery in the South, but still see the Israelite slave's lower status as proof that the Bible sanctioned slavery. Slavery within the Bible operated off phenomena that reduced an individual's social status. Pro-slavery Christians took for granted that the Israelite slave would never have been subjected to Christianity that openly welcome the violence, trauma, and oppression of colonial slavery in the United States. Conditions that led to slavery in the Old Testament existed within this period and the responses to slavery transform the dehumanizing experience which was designed to keep enslaved Africans in bondage. One of the biggest misinterpretations by the hands of pro-slavery Christians was the fact that the Mosaic laws were for Israelite slaves, those who were not Hebrew fell under a different set of laws.

The Elucidation of class

One of the foremost legal scholars of the Old South, Thomas R.R. Cobb states: "contact with the Caucasian is the only civilizer of the negro, and slavery is the only condition on which that contact can be preserved."⁶⁹ These thoughts feed the appetite of slaveholders whose interpretation of the Bible played a major role in their thoughts on slaves' ability to exist without the institution of slavery. Portraying themselves as protectors of enslaved Africans, white pro-slavery Christians saw the Bible as their insurance policy. Their so-called paternal Christian love for slaves kept enslaved Africans from competing for jobs against so-called better-qualified white counterparts, slavery also permitted them to have shelter and protected them from the

⁶⁹ Thomas R.R. Cobbs, *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America* (1858; Athens, GA., 1999), 51.

complexities of day-to-day living. The condition of free blacks in the North and elsewhere in the eyes of slaveholders selectively appealed to the evidence of their struggle as to how slavery helped slaves become Christian and civilized.

Slaveholders comforted themselves with the notion that God-sanctioned slavery. With the popular belief of the so-called “Curse of Ham” and their overall interpretation of the Bible, the antebellum southern United States embarked on a methodology that consisted of a cognizant agenda of imperialism. The United States effort to spread slavery within the tropical areas of the country impacted every aspect of life during this period. Southern filibusters and others seized upon the secularization of racial thinking by nineteenth-century ethnologists and natural scientists to argue for a southern-led imperialism in the tropical parts of the Western hemisphere to extend civilization by regenerating allegedly inferior races through slavery or one form of servitude. Yet, none of the adventurism nor their pseudo-scientific racist views went unchallenged by leading southerners, especially by southern divines.⁷⁰

Historians argue that a succeeding Plantation Generation from 1670 until around 1780 produced a greater number of enslaved Africans that were not familiar with their ancestry religions. This created a slave community that was isolated and heavily dependent on the influences of slaveholders and pro-slavery Christians. In some cases, this produced an African culture that remained untouched by European influences within religion, which provided slaves with an opportunity to create and constructed their interpretations of religion. Existing in their intense interactions, slaves were able to re-Africanize their lives as the isolation of plantation life informed their realities. This isolation also influenced the way that slaves approach prayer, healing, and worship outside of the European construction of religion. The slaveholders,

⁷⁰ Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith, *Slavery in the Americas*, 549.

nonetheless, relied on a view of the Bible that demanded obedience and one that permitted them to advance slavery. The demand for slavery increased with the entrance of Christianity as the Bible hearten the hearts of many slaveholders and pro-slavery Christians.

Slavery was a profitable industry that was the engine of the United States economy and wasn't relegated to just the South as it crossed state lines, erased ethical integrity, and outweighed the perceived Christian foundation of this country. As the value of slaves increased, so did the value of interpreting a version of the Bible that was mostly a pro-slavery account that increased as well. Even after the passage of the 13th amendment, the reliance on slavery morphed into the criminalization of African Americans in mass efforts to reinstitute the demand for slavery. These events have crystallized the lack of accountability that pro-slavery Christians and the country as a whole have embraced when remembering the totality of the relationship between slavery and Christianity. The interpretation of the Bible as a method of justifying slavery lead to the construction of the Bible that omitted many of the standard Books and chapters of the traditional King James version that has been universally revered.

The Slave Bible

The Proslavery Christians that justified slavery with their interpretation of the Bible also created a redacted "Slave Bible" that left out most of the Old Testament and included only half of the New Testament. This was done in part to prevent slaves from rebelling against the peculiar institution. It is difficult to locate who originated this ideal, nonetheless, some credit British planters in the Caribbean who had a long fear of missionaries planting seeds of freedom within the minds of their slaves. While many also believe that the Haitian Revolution inspired the creation of the first Slave Bible as it was published in 1807, three years after the revolution had occurred. The Haitian Revolution increased American and European paranoia as the fear of

slaves revolting against those who sought to oppress them would one day rid themselves of their chains. The Slave Bible operated as a tool against such slave revolts, as the Haitian Revolution remains the only occasion in which enslaved people successfully drove out their European oppressors.

This fact was never lost upon slaveholders and their pro-slavery Christian allies as they took hold of Christianity and pursued methodologies that embraced slavery as a way of life. Within the Slave Bible, the editors removed the story of the Moses and Israelites overcoming the Pharaoh and gaining their freedom. This allowed them the ability to produce an interpretation of the Bible that focus solely on obedience and other pro-slavery principles. This redated Bible was the one that was permitted for slaves to the posse, which speaks to the perceived conversion of slaves as their overall perception and insight into Christianity and the Bible was one that was restricted, limited, and manipulated. The Book of Psalms and the Book of Revelations were also omitted as these books were viewed as sources of hope.

The slaves spoken about in the Bible were not always captured and sold, which became a factor within the ideology of pro-slavery Christians. To conceal this fact the construction of the Slave Bible permitted them to restrict this fact from their slaves. The different shades of interpretations of the Bible saw slaveholders seek to serve their interests. Pro-slavery Christians insisted that slaves could best survive by being obedient to conventional slave rules or codes. For defenders of slavery, the relationship between slavery and Christianity provided them with authority over the ethics of the Bible. Therefore, the more standard versions of the Bible coupled with the construction of the Slave Bible presented Proslavery Christians with the stance that was self-concerned with virtues that sanctioned slavery. The existential ethics of the Bible and the authoritative leadership of Christianity ethics were removed and replaced with a reality that

moral theories would consider one-sided. These events highlight the result of a slaveholder's actions, as well as taking into account the action's poor interpretations of the Bible.

The emphasis on one's character converged in ethics as being an exact science in which the authority of slaveholders was only second to God. Pro-slavery Christians believed in the uniqueness of the Bible and, therefore, their ethical behavior attempted to cover their wrongs with falsehoods and redirections towards their true nature. This ethical behavior cannot be prescribed precisely with their use of the Bible, but rather within their inability to allow virtue to have its say. Pro-slavery Christians' interpretation of the Bible held a belief that no single action existed for the good of slaves, therefore, their disposition was determined by their desire to control slaves and their circumstances. The historical significance of their actions highlights how the single right to be viewed as human remained an obstacle for enslaved Africans and their descendants.

Again, understanding the doctrine of the Bible is not a quick and easy read or study, nor is it some kind of mathematical equation that has an undisputable answer, the Bible consents to customs and standards that speak to a relationship between a supreme being and his creation. The measures that pro-slavery Christians took to interpret the Bible as justification led to their motivation in many cases to define race. If we reexamine for a moment the notion that Noah's son Ham was not an only curse but was black, then we can comprehend the drive behind this type of thinking. David M. Goldenberg presents an equally complex and reasonable approach to the interpretation of the Bible by pro-slavery Christians regarding the "Curse of Ham." He observes the notion of pro-slavery Christian suggestions:

When Josiah Priest, whose works were very popular, wrote in 1843 that Ham was born a Negro, his proof rested on the meaning of Ham as "black." One writer later summarized Priest's position this way: "If Ham's name meant *black* and his descendants were *black*, these two circumstances will go far to prove the proposition in hand: viz., that *Ham was a*

Negro.” That is why Ham was given the name Ham—because he was black and the name means black. James A. Sloan, a Presbyterian minister, put it this way in 1857: “Ham’s name means ‘Black’ . . . There must, then, have been some peculiarity of color in the skin of Ham, which caused his father to give him the name which he received.”⁷¹

He continues by stating:

But still another piece to the etymological puzzle deepened the identity of the Black with the son of Noah. For the Hebrew name Ham also meant “hot,” or so these writers thought. And that, of course, corroborated the “black” evidence from etymology, for weren’t the Blacks situated in the hot countries of the world, that is, in Africa? In his 1837 sermon in South Carolina, Samuel Dunwody preached: “It is by no means improbable that the very name Ham, which signifies burnt or black, was given to [Ham] prophetically, on account of the countries that his posterity was destined to inhabit.” Samuel A. Cartwright, an American southern physician writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, said the same thing. These arguments from etymology are commonly cited in the literature of that time.⁷²

These interpretations of the Bible permitted narrow views of slaves and their descendants to perpetuate the classification of not only race but class as well. The association with the word black presented an avenue in which pro-slavery Christians travel in hopes of a rationale for slavery. These theories have no place within logical research and have been allowed space to not only grow but in many scenarios, be nurtured, cultivated, and promoted. Within these interpretations of the Bible, we are left to believe that an incident with an individual whose name has an association with the words black and hot is the reason why Africans were enslaved.

Goldenberg sums up this practice:

The Bible then was crystal clear to these writers. Because ham’s name meant both “black” and “hot.” Ham’s descendants had to come from black Africa. This line of reasoning provided the underpinning for the Curse of Ham. In a study of American proslavery and antislavery writings (mainly by clergy) written between 1837 and 1864, Ron Bartour found that the key Pentateuchal passage used to justify slavery was the Curse of Ham story and that the racial character of the story was born of the meaning of the Hebrew word *ham* as “hot” and “dark.” The authoritative *Cyclopedia of Biblical*,

⁷¹ David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 143.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 143.

Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature summed it up in 1872: “*Ham* (from the root *hamam*) combines the ideas *hot* and *swarthy*.”

Within this web of manipulation certain aspect of the interpretation of this story underlines how the Bible when used improperly can become a weapon. The audacity of pro-slavery Christians constructed an environment in which their views when undisputed, their direction was met with little resistance, and their influence was not only accepted but became the law of the land. The concept of biological race did not exist within the period of the Torah, and the myth of the “curse of Ham” has continually been misinterpreted. In the 9th chapter of Genesis the power that pro-slavery Christians give to Noah undermines the existence of a God who has made a promise not to destroy humanity, yet his servant, Noah would have the ability to curse his son and his descendants who just so happen to be his descendants as well. This passage stays alive within the pro-slavery Christian ideology mainly because within their interpretation of scripture a more sinister of this passage has been used to prop up the system of slavery. While it has been used frequently by pro-slavery Christians, it has been used in other racial conflicts as well.

The reason pro-slavery Christians latch onto race within the “curse of Ham” is seen within their literal interpretation of the Bible. This approach to the elucidation of scripture saw pro-slavery Christians and their allies take the Bible as a literal text in which they took selected events within the Bible as their defense for slavery. Within their explanations, Noah after the flood becomes a new Adam with all peoples tracing a lineage back to Noah and his three sons. The Hebrew translation of the names of his sons is translated to different colors that defenders of slavery have utilized to assign each of the sons as the ancestor of people with different skin colors. This is magnified by numerous biblical listings of nations that came from one of the three

brothers. Since both the Egyptians and Ethiopians are in the biblical record as being descended from Ham, therefore, he has been described by pro-slavery Christians as the literal ancestor of Black people across the earth. But if one researches the Bible accurately, it is Ham's son Canaan and not Ham who is cursed, and it is Noah and not God who curses Canaan. Within the Bible, Ham and his brothers are blessed by God in Genesis 9:8-11:

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you: And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth.⁷³

Within this scope of scripture, even in a literal interpretation, one must recognize that God's blessing overrides Noah's curse, and nowhere either here or elsewhere in the Bible does God take that blessing away. This blessing was comprehensive and was confirmed later in the story of Abraham, where God tells Abraham in Genesis 12:3:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.⁷⁴

The definition of "race" as we have been programmed to use it is unknown within the Bible, the only time that the word race is used in the King James Version of the Bible is to refer to a foot race. The interpretation of pro-slavery Christians never comprehended that race based on skin color was and is not a concept consistent with the Bible. The allure of slavery confined pro-slavery Christians and defenders of slavery to present their cases in front of the jury of history with various verses of scripture-like case laws within their argument. This paradigm of clarification provided shelter to their cause while also ensuring that their way of living was

⁷³ Genesis 9:8-11, *King James Version*.

⁷⁴ Genesis 12:3, *King James Version*.

secured. Within the relationship between Christianity and slavery, no two institutions can be in their nature more completely opposed to each other, yet the ability to locate verses within the Bible gave pro-slavery Christians immoderation to openly partake in bondage and tyranny. The absolute stance that slaveholders attained was appropriated largely by Christianity in support of slavery in a way that made it possible for the institution to flourish. Not only did many of the churches fail to object to slavery, but many of the pastors of American churches within the period of slavery notoriously lifted their voices in submission to the defense of slavery. Many churches openly operated as owners of slaves within different stages of slavery's existence in the United States. The following is taken from the *Charleston Courier*:

Field Negroes, by Thomas Gadson—On Tuesday, the 17th, will be sold, at the north of the Exchange, at ten o'clock, a prime gang, of ten negroes, accustomed to the culture of cotton and provisions belonging to the Independent Church in Christ Church Parish.⁷⁵

The appeal of slavery was often a force that pro-slavery Christians could not ignore, they had a dependency on the benefits of slavery which led them to attain a wayward approach to God's word. These men of faith were cognizant of the interrelatedness of all implications of utilizing the Bible as means of vindicating slavery. The souls of slaves hung in the balance, the Bible has encouraged generations to fight against sin, lust, death, and the grave. The actions of pro-slavery Christians and their allies emphasized promoting a religion that kept their subjects in submission, that they went to great lengths to uphold the cruel bonds of slavery and fought to deny freedom to their fellow men. The slaves of Africa were used to build the empire of the British West Indies and the United States, just as the Egyptians enslaved the Jews and use their labor to build their empire.

⁷⁵ *Charleston Courier Charleston, S.C. 1803 to 1852.*

But the fear of slaves learning of the deeds of Moses made this Biblical passage a threat to their rein. The Bible speaks to liberty and freedom in various stories, but all these ideas were stripped from and carved out of the Bible by pro-slavery Christians as they created custom Bibles for slaves, restricted them to be able to read and write, and openly promoted a branding of inferiority. The interpretation of the Bible by pro-slavery Christians is one of the most powerful examples ever witnessed of manipulation using a controlled narrative. The Bible became the ultimate propaganda tool and the greatest lie ever told within the history of African Americas as the Christian faith, a religion one-third of the world relied on to provide consolation, peace, and salvation was interpreted with a poorly hidden motive.

Conclusion

The life-changing practice of “rightly dividing the word of truth” was never a practice for those who considered slavery as valuable. Properly examining the passages of the Bible to understand its true meaning required slaveholders to reflect on their wayward approach to life and question their relationship with God. The care of applying love to all of God’s creation was an undertaking that they refused to accomplish, attain, or even pursue. Therefore, as slaveholders believed that the Bible sanctioned and sustained slavery coupled with acceptance of the Christian Church in America, the commitment to a system of oppression provided insight into their pro-slavery feelings. Their hearts naturally became hardened, their reason instinctively cynical, and their natures converted to insensitivity towards slaves.

Born and brought up during slavery the ability to view the institution of slavery as allowable introduced pro-slavery Christians with an opportunity to become too familiar with evil. Their defense of slavery was their investment in mitigating the impact of their respectability and innocence. Their intimate relationship with slavery permitted them to lose the power of

seeing and sharing the love of Christ to the disadvantage and their commitment to holding captives in bondage transform their relationship with reality. The creation of a different version of the Bible only reinforces their drive to control every aspect of slavery and slaves' lives. The purpose of their interpretation was to create a society that restricted the slave to the point that he had a door open to him for negotiation. This permitted the slaveholders to remain dominant within a tragic genuineness of manipulation. The Bible in the hands of pro-slavery Christians emerged as a tool in which no chapter or verse was safe from their maneuvering to fit into their will to enhance slavery.

Within the interpretation of the Bible by pro-slavery Christians no story was sacred enough to ward off misinterpretation or removal. The Old Testament was interpreted often by pro-slavery Christians who wished to prove slavery was biblically sanctioned by referencing how slavery was common among the Israelites. While the New Testament was largely overlooked, although the story of Philemon, the runaway who the Apostle Paul returned to his master was often quoted and defenders of slavery loved to point out that Jesus did not forbid slavery was of great concern by pro-slavery Christians. Therefore, the use of Christianity to terrorize and control slaves resulted in pro-slavery Christians and slaveholders finding what they needed in scripture and ignoring or suppressing the rest. The position in which slaveholders positioned themselves served as a denial of justice for slaves in which verses in the Bible that might explicitly contradict the few proof texts slaveholders quoted to justify themselves never entered their rationale.

Their unjust interpretations made for a concrete example of biased and immoral practices of slavery that permitted a powerful majority group to compel acts of service from those in need of spiritual rescue. Oppressed slaves remained oppressed within this system of using the Bible as

cover, eventually, the absence of freedom provided strength to pro-slavery Christians. With this strength, they invested in attacking the psyche of slaves, by presenting a religion that blessed their oppression. The realization that few members of the oppressor race can relate to the plight of enslaved Africans nurtured these approaches to interpreting the Bible, which weaken the meaning of conversion, belittled the demand for social revolution, and lessen the comprehension required to fully express the love of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4 The Perception(s) of slavery

The perception of African American history within the dynamic of Christianity and slavery has several different elements that have different levels of significance. Perception or the perceptions of slaveholders and their counterparts during this period within history offers different stances that have contributed to the totality of the remembrance of slavery from a Christian lens. Within the centuries of slavery in America, the use of the Bible advanced the slaveholder's grip on slavery and transformed the institution completely. In their efforts to justify slavery, the defense of slavery gravitated to using God's word to justify the South's way of life while allies in the North supported this lifestyle. The creation of race was an product of America that was influenced by the Christianity of the land. Exploring this topic in detail, chapter four serves as an engaging journey into the thought process of Christians who openly championed slavery. By highlighting the utilization of the Bible within these individuals thoughts. Leaders, and influencers of Proslavery Christians ideology as well as the overall investigation of the African American experience in this country has produced a great need for the exegesis of the Bible to be properly address in order to comprehend the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Nonetheless, the perception of defenders of slavery can help answer the question, in what way did the Christianity of this country influence slavery?

Chapter 4 Introduction

The perception of slavery in the eyes of Proslavery Christians shaped the history of the United States in more ways than one. Generations of Americans with differing brands of common sense that is not merely unpretentious, or candid have come up with theories, slogans, and observations on slavery with a Christian view. Within the scope of this reality, there has not been any scientific evidence that can be found to confirm that the perception of slavery and that of enslaved Africans have warranted the inferiority tags that have endured. However, the point of exploring such an idea is centered around identifying the method(s) in which the Christian defenders have approach the totality of the peculiar institution of slavery. Within their rationalization methods, these individuals have insisted that “slavery removed Africans for a culture that worshipped other gods,” or that “Christianity removed Africans from practicing witchcraft.” Persistent claims of removing “Africans from the practice of sorcery” or that “Christianity brought African heathens into a land where they can hear the gospel,” also were perceptions that somehow stuck. Even the tall tale that “Christian masters provided Christian instruction to enslaved Africans,” or that “under the system of slavery, slaves were treated with kindness, as many northern visitors can attest to,” functioned as smoke and mirrors in which the pro-slavery Christians relied upon.

Within the relationship between Christianity and slavery, the perception of this group of passionate Christians caused them to use the Bible as a shield against their unethical conduct. As they threw stones and hide their hands, these defenders of slavery crafted a method of providing an perception of slavery that presented holding enslaved Africans in bondage as an act of God, a work of Christ ministry, and an work of the compassionate Christianity. A perception

that declared that “slaves are treated more benevolently than are workers in oppressive northern factories.” Defenders of slavery utilized passages of the Bible such as Ephesians 5:22 and Timothy 2:11-15 to insist that slaves were to play a subordinate role within the confines of slavery. Slaveholders and their allies averred to the perception of the “curse of Ham” as their moral explanation in the book of Genesis. These social reasonings on the part of the Proslavery Christian allowed them to declare they love God in one hand while they held his creation in bondage with the other hand. The perception utilized by defenders of slavery obtained a Christian perception as a tool that was fully loaded with lethal weaponry. Planting their defense within the margins of the Bible, their evidence used for their validation of slavery allowed them to hold fast unto the holy writ.

Therefore, it is safe to declare that the perception of Proslavery Christian advocates has impacted different eras of World history and has been a source of destruction that eats away at the truth. Often leading to a poor relationship between different groups, the relationship between Christianity and slavery has been impacted by this intense view. Therefore, when exploring this ideology, the question, in what way did the Christianity of this country influence slavery?” This inquiry offers a unique opportunity to investigate the dynamic of the relationship between Christianity and slavery within a period in which Christianity was a voice that was not subjected to any other religions, policies, or ideologies. Additionally, this question must be examined within the scope of underestimating the overall slaveholding ethics within the relationship between Christianity and slavery, and how this question has been confronted by many historians’ moral sensibilities.

Nevertheless, according to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, by 1867, approximately 12.5 million Africans had been sold into New World slavery. Of the 11 million or

so Africans who survived the Middle Passage, only about 388,000 were shipped directly to what became the United States.¹

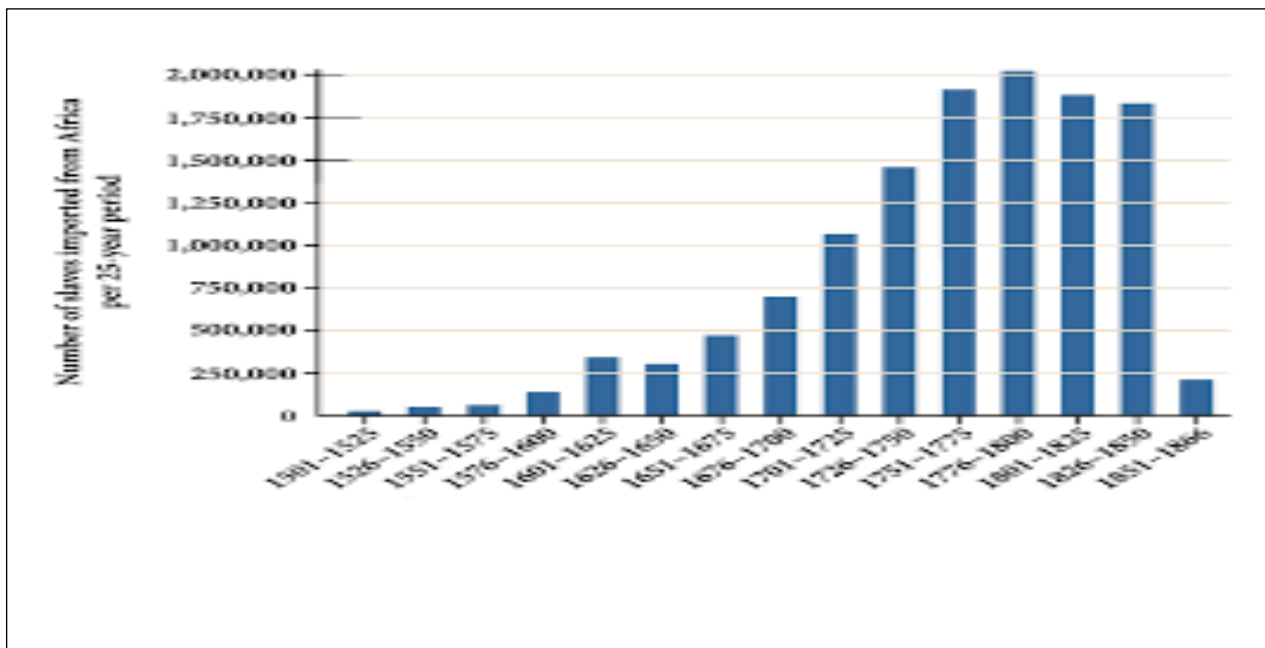


Table: Transatlantic Slave Trade Database of 1867

It is sufficient to make three brief points about the concept and reality of slavery. First, the ancient ideal of personal subordination was modified by Christianity but continued to influence medieval and early modern thought. Even in countries where chattel bondage had disappeared. In medieval England, for example, Bracton identified villenins with Roman slaves, and carefully distinguished them from other kinds of dependent laborers whose rights were protected by the state. Second, insofar as actual forms of servitude approximated the concept of slavery, as elaborated, for example, in Roman law, they represented the extreme example of treating men as objects to be manipulated, humiliated, and exploited. Hence the term “slavery” continued to acquire metaphorical associations implying the ultimate in dependence. Disability,

¹ David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 25-27.

powerlessness, sinfulness, and negation of autonomous self-consciousness. Third, the internal contradictions of slavery were not confined to theory, but arose ultimately from historical attempts to keep and govern slaves, a situation which always necessitated compromise. No lawgivers could forget that tools and instruments do not run away, rebel, commit crimes, or help protect the state from external danger. No master, whether in ancient Rome, medieval Tuscany, or seventeenth-century Brazil, could forget that the obsequious servant might also be a “domestic enemy” bent on theft, poisoning, or arson. Throughout history it has been said that slaves, if occasionally as loyal and faithful as good dogs, were for the most part lazy, irresponsible, cunning, rebellious, untrustworthy, and sexually promiscuous.²

The institution of slavery, then, has always given rise to conflict, fear, and accommodation. The settlement of the New World magnified these liabilities, since the slaves now came from an alien and unfamiliar culture; offered easy refuge. Accordingly, the introduction of Negro slavery to the Americas brought spasmodic cries of warning, anxiety, and racial repugnance. But the grandiose visions of New World wealth—once the Spanish had plundered the Aztecs and Incas—seemed always to require slave labor. The economics of slavery have no bearing on the argument at this point. It is obvious that the various colonizing nations, whatever their domestic traditions of servitude, seized upon Africans as the cheapest and most expedient labor supply to meet the immediate demands of mining and tropical agriculture. The institution took on a variety of forms as a result of European cultural differences, the character of the work performed, geographic and ecological conditions, and a host of other variables. But Anglo-American slavery was not unique in defining the bondsman as chattel property endowed with elements of human personality. Nor was Anglo-American society

² Thomas Bender, John Ashworth, David Brion Davis, and Thomas L. Haskell, *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, 18.

unusual in having to accommodate the underlying contradictions of the master-slave relationship.³

The Perception of Race

Maintainig and justifying slavery solidified a racial-classification system backed by the perceptopn of individuals Christians within leadership roles. Race is something that was made up by Americans. A closer ;ool of history reveals that the the story of race is a story of labor. The first officially recorded condemnation of interracial sex was the public whipping of Hugh Davis, a white man, ordered by the Virginia General Assembly in 1630 for “abusing himself to the dishonor of God and shame of Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a Negress.”⁴ The Virginia House oif Burgesses—the first elected kegislature in the colonies—met to debate the question. According to the patricarchal mandates of British inheritance and kinsip law, the children should have had the status of their white fathers. Yet the colonists could see the political and economic disadvantages of classifying children born to Black womem as white: such a decision would expand the pool of human beings who were entitled to the privileges of whiteness, and it would decrease the pool of human beings who could be enslaved. In the end, in 1662, the colonists passed a statute that maintained the racial hierarchy:

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishmen upon a negro wman should be slave or free, *Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assemvly*, that all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.⁵

³ Thomas Bender, John Ashworth, David Brion Davis, and Thomas L. Haskell, *The Antislavery Debate Campitlalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, 18-19.

⁴ Kevin Mumford, “After Hugh: Statutory Race Segregation in Colonial America. 1630-1725,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 43, no. 3 (1999): 280.

⁵ “Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother” (1662), *Encyclopedia Virginia* (2020), enctlopediavirginia.org/entries/negro-women-children-to-serve-according-to-the-codition-of-the-mother-1662/.

Most of us were taught that North America was initially colonized by those seeking religious freedoms. But in fact, most Europeans, including Pilgrims, came for land and economic opportunity. At that time, there was no concept of race as we comprehend it today. Thus, the color of one's skin is an concept orginial to North America. No one, identified by the concept of color, but rather by the country in which they originated from, such as French, English, Dutch, and Spanish. By the early seventeenth-century, the colony's planation economy was blooming. This created a massive need for cheap labor, a need largely filled by poor European immigrants. Some land owners also used enslaved people from African nations. But at the time, an enslaved person's status was not lifelong. One could gain his or her freedom after an agreed upon length of time in some cases and in others it was customary for some slaves to gain their freedom after seven years. However, in 1676, enslaved Africans joined forces with European indentured servants in a large rebellion against the Colonial government of Virigina. Alarmed by the natural alliance between the indentured and enslaved, the ruling class passed a series of laws that segregated and permanently enslaved those of African descent, while simultaneously giving their European counterparts new rights and status'.

This divide and conquer strategy paved the way for what would become an organized system of racial chattel slavery and that was how defenders of slavery kept a system in place and why those who preferred chattel slavery has white Christians who were poor not challenging this system. Because at the heart of the operation of the system of slavery and the creation of race produced a bill of goods that somehow whiteness that included all who possed the chosen skin color to receive the benefits of society. The first legal use of the term "white" in association with race, appeared in 1691. In a document created by the colonial government of Virginia, used intentionally to differentiate people by the color of their skin rather than their nation of origin.

Additionally, Thomas Jefferson put forth the first U.S national census, which placed the population into the categories of free white males, free white females, and all other free persons in 1790. Enslaved black people were counted as well, but only as 3/5 of a person and Native Americans weren't counted at all. In its initial seating, Congress passed the Naturalization Act, which stated that only free whites could become United States citizens.

Thus, the need to be white went hand and hand with the Christian perspective of freedom within the United States, this reality permitted those who happen to be white to have access to citizenship. Consequently, what humans have done is ascribe meaning and difference to skin colors and then use those meanings to create hierarchies. So then, when we refer to race, we are saying that race has been socially constructed and maintained in a way in which a select group of humans benefit off an system of hierarchies related to racial differences.

The period of slavery openly institutionalized separation, prohibited mixing, and legitimized racism. The relationship between Christianity and slavery was impacted by the system of power that race provided, as defenders of slavery were emblematic of that sort of cultural adaptation and innovation of creating an caste system in order to impose coercion. For instance, the Church of England was established in South Carolina and by law established colonies that had social and political privileges that was associated with membership in their church that only free whites could enjoy. This meant that the church enjoyed some measure of financial support from the colonial governments, for ministers' salaries and the maintenance of church buildings in particular. Each parish was a geographic district that elected a vestry, the lay board that handled the temporal matters of the parish, including poor relief, elections, the employment of the minister, roads and bridges, and other duties assigned by the provincial government. Though frequently pretending to it, the Church of England in these colonies

enjoyed no monopoly on matters of the divine, surrounded as it was by practitioners of various African religious systems and numbers of Protestant dissenters, especially in Carolina.⁶

The cultural power of the church and its liturgy grew from the mid-seventeenth century to the late eighteenth but as a later refinement to societies whose fundamental cultural scripts were rooted in race and slavery. Thus English religious culture was selectively translated to the colonies in ways that augmented the power of white laypersons in parish affairs and pastoral relationships. Clergy who served in the plantation colonies found themselves removed from the structures of English church life that gave them power over laypersons. Financial considerations deepened their dependence. The revenues of the clergy in colonial America were also less secure than in most English parishes, with their income-producing glebe land and other endowments. Clergy in the colonies depended on the beneficence of the London-based Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), the provincial legislatures, fees for services, and free-will offerings. Prudent clergy in the colonies learned quickly the importance to their own well-being of understanding local culture and personalities. As examples in the following pages will show, the most dangerous area in which clergy might depart from colonial norms was in ministry across the developing color line.⁷

Searching desperately to locate their existence within the America story, chattel slavery was not confessional but racial as it was heritable and permanent. Thus, the context of one's skin provided the needed evidence to ensure that generations of African Americans were born into and passed down as property. Enslaved Africans and their descendants status as slaves was an profitable for white enslavers as they could be mortgaged, traded, bought, sold, used as

⁶ On colonial Anglicanism generally, see Woolverton, *Colonial Anglicanism in North America*; James B. Bell, *Imperial Origins*; Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity*; Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*.

⁷ Nicholas M. Beasley, *Christian Ritual and the Creation of British Slave Societies, 1650-1780*, 5.

vollateral, given as a gift, and disposed of violently.⁸ Thomas Jefferson sat at his portable writing desk in a rented room in Philadelphia as he penned those famous words on June of 1776.⁹ “We hold these to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Crerator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Words that provided an Christian approach to the foundation as well as a testament to the formation of this country, yet while he constructed this historical combination of thought he not only excluded those held in bondage, his fierce assertion for the fundamental and natural rights of citizenship overlooked his female counterpart as well. Jefferson words have stood as proof that the designed of America was built upon the spirit of liberty, yet this global reputation that the United States has promoted has longed been a otstacle for enslaved Africans and the generations that they have produced.

The Perception of Slavery from 1781-1820

Historian Donald G. Matthews, a professor of history at the University of North Carolina, has authored such books as *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality 1780-1844* and *Agitation for Freedom: The Abolitionists*, as well as numerous scholarly contributions. Within his findings he suggests that consistently undervaluing the slaveholding ethics in hopes of the preservation of one’s moral sensibilities has been for better or worse, a natural process.¹⁰ Within the late 1700s and early 1800s, Proslavery Christians argued that slavery had existed throughout history and was the natural state of mankind as the Greeks, Romans, and other ancient civilizations utilizes slavery. Nonetheless, the “Age of Abolition”,

⁸ William Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Feartures Shown by Its Statutes, Judical Decisions, and Illustrative Facts*, 105.

⁹ National Park Service, “Declaration House: Independence National Historical Park, Pennsylvania,” www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/places-declarationhouse.html.

¹⁰ Donald G. Matthews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xv-xvii, 151-52.

from 1781 until around 1920 produced a response by defenders of slavery to find shelter within the Bible. Some of the references to a biblical sanction of slavery were documented in several proslavery pamphlets, articles and by Christian speakers who have referred to the bible. Such a position has become clear as pro-slavery Christians felt that they were being attacked due to their relationship to slaveholding. The relationship between Christianity and slavery, in general, has always been a moral issue, and therefore, the roots of the perception of the Bible by Southern Christians became a moral issue as well.

William Loughton Smith of South Carolina on March 17, 1790, argued that if slavery was a “moral evil” then it was “like many others which exist in all civilized countries, and which the world quietly submits to.”¹¹ Smith was born in the year of 1758, his exact birth date is unknown, however on December 19, 1812, he died. He was an American lawyer, politician, and diplomat from Charleston, South Carolina. At the time of this infamous declaration in Congress none the less, Smith represented South Carolina in the United States House of Representatives, and he held this position from 1789 until 1797.¹² This was a common perception of slavery by many significance individuals who provided willingly their expertise on the issues of slavery. Nonetheless, the overall express opposition to slavery was fascinated with a defense of slavery that sought out conformation in God’s word. Bondage and slavery appeared throughout the Bible, however, within the context of the Bible, the people of God often cried out to him and compelled God to intervene on their behalf—in which he often did comply with his people’s request within the Old Testament. Within the New Testament of the Bible, the death of Jesus represents the appearance of grace as well as an invitation into a life of liberty. Yet, within the 1780s, the reality of holding human beings in bondage in America was a normal occurrence.

¹¹ *Annals of Congress*, 1 Cong., 2d sess... 17 March 1790, p. 1560.

¹² <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/smith-william-loughton/>

The anti-slavery Christian argument began to gain momentum, slavery was considered a sin for those who opposed slavery. The principle of right and wrong can be a debatable island surrounded by violent waters; the relationship between Christianity and slavery for the Proslavery Christian became a fundamental focus of their argument.

The weaponization of the Bible by the Southern states of America soon became their stick of choice, as they expressly use this stick to beat home their observations of the Bible and their feelings of being attacked by the North and Abolitionists Movement. The master-slave relationship often became a moral debate that was defended by the fear of the sudden end to the economy that slavery produced. Nevertheless, these defenders of slavery sought to inform their opposition of their right to hold slaves in bondage, their perception of the Bible came to be justified by their take of the Holy Scripture. Thus, it was the pro-slavery Christian literal reading of the Bible that was used as their shield as well, therefore, when anti-slavery Christians quoted the word of God, pro-slavery Christians responded with their perception of the Bible that supported their cause. Consequently, the disease of perception permitted pro-slavery Christians to suggest that the Bible approved of slavery. They contended that slavery was a positive and good condition of life that brought those in bondage closer to the God of the Bible. Slavery was portrayed as an institution of grace that provided shelter and food for the heathen, as a way of life that advanced Africans' position in life.

Rather than abolish slavery, these defenders sought to extend it by insisting that slavery was an institution of love of State and Country. If there was no slavery, how would the country produce rice how would the rice be profitable, who would labor to produce tobacco, and how in the world would cotton reach the masses without slavery, where the underlining concerns of the pro-slavery Christians. Notwithstanding, the teaching of justification through the Bible

was not birthed within this period, for “obedience to masters” was a celebrated slogan retrieved for the word of God before anti-slavery Christian or Abolishment Movement. However, with advances in technology and faster methods of communication, the shadow of slavery on a Christian nation became bigger and bigger. This period provided a combination of historical events that would place extreme pressure on the moral good within the institution of slavery, which in turn nurtured the relationship between Christianity and slavery. This relationship was no longer at its infancy stage of the 1600s, now able to walk and talk, functioning as a teenager who was intent on having things done their way, the perception of slavery and the Bible provides formative lessons within this relationship’s union.

In 1789 a supportive document was constructed for the pro-slavery Christians cause titled, *“The Benevolent Planters”*, it was a propaganda tool promoted by proslavery groups that were written by Thomas Bellamy. Bellamy was born at Kingston-on-Thames and was a miscellaneous writer with writings that dated back to 1763, he served as an apprenticeship to a hosier in Newgate Street, London, and went into business on his account after serving as a clerk in a bookseller’s store for 20 years in Paternoster Row. They parted ways due to a disagreement, he started the Literary Museum in 1787, which contained engraved portraits of living persons, with details and accounts of their lives. In Haymarket, his dramatic piece of writing “The Benevolent Planters” was fabricated.¹³ The play was a response to an abolitionist's effort to utilize the creative support of artists, poets, actors, directors, and others to voice the wrongs of slavery.

¹³ Leslie Stephen, “Bellamy, Thomas (1745-1800)” *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 4. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

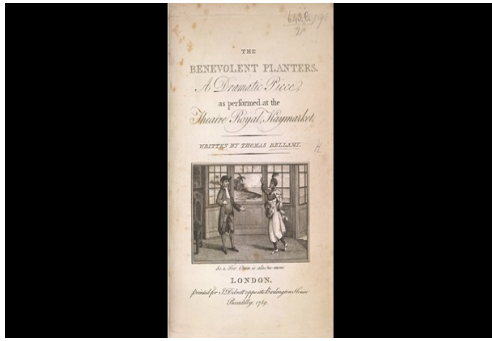


Figure 1. *The Benevolent Planters* by Thomas Bellamy.

The play tells the story of Oran and Selima, two black lovers who are separated in Africa and are reunited on adjoining plantations in the West Indies. Within this story, the author suggests that the easy and idle life that they had in Africa has been replaced by a God-fearing, productive, and structured life in slavery. The author also insists that the slaveholders, “Goodwin” and “Heartfee” served as paternal figures who sought to provide Christianity to enslaved Africans while changing their overall well-being. Drawing on racist stereotypes of this period, the play avoids highlighting the inhumane conditions associated with slavery.¹⁴ All the complexity of the past requires proper observations within the present, as the preservation of critical events works as headlines within our memory, but the additional texts that have been written outside of the margins offer us rich insight into the inferiority of men. The perception of Christianity regarding slavery can be seen within the confines of letters and sermons as well. Nonetheless, within the work of “*The Benevolent Planters*,” Bellamy’s position on the anti-abolition movement provides a text that only helps the abolition side of things.

His articulation of how masters who brought productive functions to their slaves’ lives, such as sports or even lovers together, showed that no matter how ‘benevolent’ the master

¹⁴ Thomas Bellamy, *The Benevolent Planters. A Dramatic Piece*.

attempts to be, these actions only shine a light on how the need to provide these services highlight the inhumane reality of a life of bondage. The dark side of slavery couldn't be washed away with creative writings or elaborate stage plays, nor has the context of such work properly defended the "Proslavery Christian" defense of slavery. The mental torture promoted by Bellamy's work displays the lack of concern that defenders of slavery possessed, within his attempt to showcase the 'benevolent' of such an event, he fails to account for how traumatic such an occasion would appear in the minds of anyone who has experience love. To promote the torture of Planters utilizing information for their gain presents little comfort in their benevolence, their version of generosity, according to this story, presents the Planters as coming into the knowledge of Oran and Selima's prior relationship and making the two lovers do things just for their pleasures. Bragging within the story that they brought them together while neglecting to contemplate that slavery took them apart.

Many perspectives emerged from the confines of Proslavery Christians", George McDuffie was the 55th Governor of South Carolina and a member of the United States Senate. He was born on August 10, 1790, in Columbia County, Georgia, and educated at the University of South Carolina.¹⁵ Within one of his messages to an audience of South Carolinas, McDuffie asserted:

No humane institution, in my opinion, is more manifestly consistent with the will of God than domestic slavery.... Under both the Jewish and Christian... regions, domestic slavery existed with the...sanction of its prophets, its apostles, and finally its great Author. The patriarchs themselves, those instruments of God, were slaveholders. the African Negro is destined by Providence to occupy this condition of servile dependence....It is marked on the face, stamped on the skin, and evinced by the intellectual inferiority...of this race. They have all the qualities that fit them as slaves, and not one of those that would fit them to be freemen. They are utterly unqualified, not only for rational freedom but for self-government of any kind. They are, in all respects, physical, moral, and political, inferior to millions of the human race.... In all respects, the

¹⁵ Hugh Chisholm, "McDuffie, George". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 17 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 214.

comforts of our slaves are greatly superior to...millions of paupers.... There is not upon the face of the earth any class of people, high or low, so perfectly free from care and anxiety. They know that their masters will provide for them, under all circumstances.... In a word, our slaves are cheerful, contented, and happy, much beyond the general condition of the human race.... It is demonstrable that the production of cotton depends, not so much on soil and climate as on the existence of domestic slavery.... every practical planter will concur (agree) in the opinion that if all the slaves in these states were now emancipated [freed], the American crop would be reduced the very next year from 1,200,000 to 600,000 bales.¹⁶

In this speech, Mr. Duffie attacked the stance of abolitionists as he strongly defended the institution of slavery as a positive good, and not just a necessary evil and attempted to point to the moral benefits of slavery. His stances were central to the southern defense of slavery which gave voice to their disposition. The Northern perspective of slavery was complicated as well, Solon Robinson, a trader, and agriculturist from the North reported on his travels throughout the South in 1849. Stating that slaves' lives were better than those of free laboring men, he argued against giving enslaved Africans and their descendant's liberty. He argued:

I boldly and truly assert that you may travel Europe over – yea, you may visit the boasted freedmen of America – aye, you may search the world over, before you find a laboring peasantry who are happier, more contented, as a class of people, or who are better clothed and fed and better provided for in sickness, infirmity and old age, or who enjoy more of the essential comforts of life, than these so-called miserable, oppressed, abused, starved slaves.... I doubt whether one single instance can be found among the slaves of the south, where one has injured himself at long and excessive labor... Masters know that overdriving a negro, as well as a mule, is the poorest way to get work out of either of them... In all my tour, during the past winter, I did not see or hear of but two cases of flogging” one of which was for stealing, and the other for running away from a good a master as ever a servant need to have... But I do seriously say that I did not see or hear of one place where the negroes were not well fed: and I did not see a ragged gang of negroes in the South, and I could only hear of one plantation where the negroes were overworked or unjustly flogged, and on that plantation, the master was a drunken, abusive wretch, as heartily despised by his neighbors as he was hated by his negroes.¹⁷

¹⁶ J.A. Thackston, *Primary and Secondary Education In South Carolina: From 1780 to 1860*, 51.

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

The Second Major Defense of Slavery: 1820's

The use of the Old and New Testament of the Bible permitted defenders of slavery to attempt to insist that the entire Bible sanctioned the institution of slavery. The *Richmond Enquirer* debated that when adding states to the Union, slavery was not a forbidden proposition. On February 15, 1820, the front-page states that it was written by Thomas Ritchie, however, one cannot confirm that he wrote the entire piece. Within the "Scriptural Research" on page 2, the article offers its reader three "asseverations" on slavery and the author's perception contends, "Even were this reasoning unsupported numberless proofs found in the written Gospel, would not such argument alone verify out third asseveration: namely, that slave-holding is not incompatible with the doctrines of the new testament; but on the contrary authorized by Christianity?"¹⁸

The author continues, "The special statement of such inferences here seems the more pertinent to our object, in making these scriptural researches, because we have reason to imagine that some good men *even in the slave-holding states*, men not *quite so inquisitive as we have been*, erroneously suppose that by the establishment of the *Gospel*, that the *Mosaic law*, *moral and typical*, is *abolished*."¹⁹ The article solicits its reader to examine the extraordinary connection between religion and slavery. The mystery of the authorization of slavery is then suggested to be permitted based on research of the Bible that the author argues, "*arguments that vindicate the moral validity of slaveholding, drawn from the sacred writing in the old testament, would lose much of the authentic weight that in truth properly belongs to them.*"²⁰ His perception

¹⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

of the Bible contends, “True it is that the *typical* and *ceremonial* part of the Mosaic law is now utterly abolished. But surely it is no less true that the *fundamental precepts of rectitude*, enacted, both in the *primal and Mosaic institutions*, are nor abolished because they are of perpetual obligation.”²¹

The article dances around providing legitimate evidence that slavery was approved by Christianity, for no such verse exists that states “slavery is sectioned” by God or Jesus. Now, the author begins to identify key passages of the Bible as the author points to Jesus:

In proof that such doctrine is indisputable, and that the supposed opinion which we are aiming to correct requires correction, we render to the very words of the blessed Redeemer uttered with such energetic and beautiful simplicity in his divine sermon on the mount: “Think not (said he) that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. Sooner shall the heaven and the earth perish than one tittle of the law fails.”²²

The author utilized poor hermeneutics, like many of his contemporaries his perception of the Bible fails to distinguish the regulation of slavery from the approval of slavery. Jesus’ stance on fulfilling the law was in no way his approval of any law that solely pointed to the approval of slavery, his purpose in proclaiming this reassurance was for the edification of his followers to comprehend his arrival would enhance the laws of the Old Testament and validate the work of the prophets. Even though Old Testaments saints were allowed to practice slavery, they operated under restrictions. Nevertheless, the author argues, “We now proceed more directly to evince, that under the gospel, tenures of involuntary service, were not condemned or prohibited—by the great luminaries of the New Testament.”²³ This statement is jampacked with the bad hermeneutic coupled with bad theology that limited the author(s) perception of the Bible.

²¹ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2. ., 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

One of the biggest flaws of this article is that the author(s) omits the fact that enslave Africans should have been considered as being “made in the image of God” as the book of Genesis (which is part of the Pentateuch or books of Moses) states in the 1st chapter and the 27th verse.

The author(s) continues, “Our first general remark is, that we find no disapprobation or any prohibition of involuntary service in either of the four Evangelists. In all of them, the Gospel dispensation is exhibited as *never interfering with any of the civil institutions or political establishments of the world.*”²⁴ This statement is laced with the bitter roots that have led to America’s division over slavery. Mining the Bible to support the institution of slavery cheapen the author(s) work, going to great lengths in attempts to justify slavery provides evidence of the *Enquirer* suffering from the disease of perception. Rather than “research” God’s word for inspiration, the *Richmond Enquirer* author(s) worked to provide proof that slavery was sanctioned by Christianity. Once again, the author(s) asserts:

Hence perhaps the silence of its great author concerning the subject matter of our researches. Nevertheless, the blessed Redeemer in two of his beautiful parables demonstrates, (by internal evidence,) that the *servile condition* was familiar to his divine imagination. “*And that servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*” Again. “*Out thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.*”²⁵

The insertion of Luke 12:47 and Luke 19:22 were passages that pro-slavery Christians and slaveholders utilized to imply that slaves were required to be obedient to their masters. By skillfully referring to slaves as “servants”, the ability to locate verses that use the same wording help to defend slavery. The *Enquirer* conveniently avoids mentioning that the Biblical model of slavery in both the Old and New Testament was a system in which Jewish and Roman slaves

²⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

were bondservants who were given significant legal status. Very few bond servants were slaves for life and the Bible's version of slavery was not based off the race. Most of these bondservants were prisoners of war and were seen as enemies of the state, while enslaved Africans were bought and sold in some cases or kidnapped in other cases.

Nevertheless, inflected by the disease of perception, the author(s) shifts towards selecting another verse in the Bible that supports the narrative of the Bible sanctioning slavery as he continued with a partial selection of Matthew 22:21:

Slaveholding was a tenure extensive in the Roman law; and none will deny that our Saviour exhorted his bearers to obey that law; in those remarkable words "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."²⁶

On face value alone this passage seems to be a stretch as the author extends his perception to indicate that the Bible supports the slave-owner relationship. The concept of slavery within the period of this article, February 15, 1820, was a version of slavery that was based on the ownership model, this distinction required the author to explore the Apostle's Paul writings as well. The work of Paul has often been referred to as the Pauline epistles, Epistles of Paul or Letters of Paul. 13 of the books within the New Testament are credited to the Apostle, however, some of the book's authorship has been debated, nevertheless, for the sake of argument, let's credit these works to Paul. These letters, epistles, or books were written over several years and from several different locations with each epistle expressing differing concerns to the intended recipient. For example, the Book of Romans is the longest book written by Paul and its target audience is a growing church in Rome, Paul expresses his enthusiasm for their

²⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

success and his desire to visit them personally stating; “Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.”²⁷

Notwithstanding, the work of Paul addresses salvation, faith, grace, sanctification, and many practical concerns for living as a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul offers basic doctrines of the Christian faith for the church of Rome to embrace in their transitional stage.²⁸ Another writer that pro-slavery Christians located in their search for Biblical writers was Simon-Peter or Peter, one of Jesus’s original disciples. Within the New Testament the Epistles of St. Peter the Apostle was two letters or books, however, his work is typically grouped with the three Letters of John, and the Letter of Jude, and are considered the Catholic Letters. The Catholic Letters were among the last of the Biblical literature to be settled on as canonical before the agreement of East and West in 367 CE, as the history of the New Testament canon shows.

Only 2 John and 2 Peter were universally recognized during the 2nd and 3rd centuries as the First Letter of Peter and the Second Letter of Peter generally are placed as the 21st and 22nd books of the New Testament.²⁹ Notwithstanding, Proslavery Christians’ use of the Apostle Paul and Peter’s work to evolve the intent of the Gospel dispensation, presents a powerful method in which the author(s) of the *Richmond Enquirer* utilized these passages to argue:

But if we examine the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel dispensation, as *expounded for the practice among the Gentile nations* by those great founders of Christianity, St. Paul, and St. Peter; it will appear incontestably that *slave-holding was regulated and sanctioned—bur never interdicted by the primitive Prelates and Apostles*: we shall cite sundry passages from these inspired writers to prove it. In the 18th Chap. Of the 1st Epistle of St. Peter, it is thus written!! *You who are servants be subject to your masters with all reverence. Not only to the good and gentle but also the morose. If when acting will you meet with ill-treatment, this is well pleasing in the sight of God.*”³⁰

²⁷ Romans 1:10, King James version.

²⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/letter-of-Paul>

²⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/letter-of-Peter>

³⁰ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

Racist thinking was not birthed with the utilization of Christianity within the period of slavery, however, contrary to popular beliefs the use of the Bible to defend slavery created a deeply entrenched discriminatory perception of African Americans. The ethics of the individuals throughout this period led to a pro-slavery Christians shift to use a version of Christianity that operated with a motive to promote the practice of slavery throughout the United States as the debate over slavery arose. In the South where the economy thrived off plantations as slave labor was cheap (free) and essential to the economy, thus, these plantations required a voluminous number of slaves. The plantation owners used this cheap source of labor to save money, so then the publications that supported slavery did so with various incentives.

Whether receiving money directly from slaveholders—benefiting from this way of life or just outright, defending their right to hold Africans in slavery—newspapers within the slave-holding states displayed an innate ability to turn to the word of God seeking acceptance for their Christian disposition. This can be seen as the author of the *Enquirer* states:

St. Paul is equally explicit: he repeats, again and again, his exhortations addressed both to menials and masters. “*Servants, obey in all respects those who are your masters according to the flesh: masters, render to your servants what is just and equitable.*” Colos. 3, 23. “Servants obey those “who are masters according to the flesh, “with fear and trembling as you do “the Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but as servants of the Christ; knowing that whatever any one doth, the Lord will reward him for it, *whether he be a bondman or a freeman!* And you masters observe the same conduct towards them, knowing that you “yourselves have a master in Heaven.”³¹ He continues, “Ep. 5.6, “*Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters—to be in all things studious to please—not answering again—not embezzling—but showing all good fidelity.*”³²

Scripture passages that pro-slavery Christians use to defend slavery provided real estate for the *Enquirer* to use these passages to support various aspects of slavery, as the buying

³¹ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

³² *Ibid.*, 2.

and selling of slaves and the Fugitive Slave Act within this period were often the topics of the day. Deeply influencing the turn to the Bible to defend this practice, the author of the *Enquirer* argues:

Tit. 1, 29. But in his first epistle to Timothy, this blessed Apostle not only gives to the young Bishop of Ephesus *formal instructions*, by which he is to guide all *the slaves in his Divorces*—but he superadds the *sanction of the Redeemer's authority* which authenticates those instructions.....In some of the cases above cited it might perhaps be contended, that the word *servant* does not, necessarily imply *slave*.³³

Living life in a moral way was extremely important as the Bible was held highly in many people's lives within this important era. Many pro-slavery Christians thought that if they found places in the Bible where slavery was addressed and even supported, then they could level the playing field since slavery on the ground level seemed oppressive and immoral. It could not be an immoral practice they believed if God addressed slavery in any positive way. The narrative that Proslavery Christians also insisted on was if slavery was immoral then why did it exist at the time of Jesus Christ since slavery and servitude are mentioned throughout the New Testament. Jesus saying nothing against slavery was a position to which Proslavery Christians often referred, therefore, the Roman slavery that was popular during that period became a source of comparison.

An additional argument utilized by pro-slavery Christians was the fact that the Bible does not say directly that owning slaves would not be permitted to enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, the *Richmond Enquirer* insists on promoting instructions within this particular article. The author contends, "But in the written instructions that we next transcribe, the phrase "*under the yoke*" fixes the *nature* of the *involuntary service*." ³⁴ Following this extended section detailing how the Bible sanctioned slavery, the author(s) argue,

³³ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

1. “Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their masters worthy of all honor that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach.”³⁵

The Third Major Defense of Slavery: 1820’s

The pro-slavery Christian defense of slavery arose in the United States with a combination of Northern and Southern theories that responded to the anti-slavery movement. The general reasoning and justification of slavery for captives taken from their projected life remain a broken glass with pieces that have not been able to be located. The Quaker domination has been historically renowned for their Antislavery sentiment in the Northern states. However, in 1765, a Quaker, born in England, who relocated as a child with his family to South Carolina, Zephaniah Kingsley Jr, became a planter, slave trader, and merchant as he assembled numerous plantations.³⁶ Within one of his writings in 1828, *A treatise on the patriarchal system of society, as it exists in some governments in America, and the United States, under the name of slavery, with its necessary and advantages*, Kingsley argues, “The idea of slavery, when associated with cruelty and injustice, is revolting to every philanthropic mind; but when that idea is associated with justice, and benevolence, slavery, commonly so called, easily amalgamates with the ordinary conditions of life.”³⁷ He insisted:

To counteract the existing prejudice against slavery, by making it evident that the condition of slaves may be equally happy and more independent of the ordinary evils of life, than that of the common class of whites denominated free—that they are now equally virtuous, moral, and less corrupted than the ordinary class of laboring whites—that their labor is far more productive—that they yield more support and benefit to the State, which, under a well-regulated system of management, is better fitted to endure a state of war

³⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2., 2.

³⁶ historynet.com/Zephaniah-kingsley-champion-of-free-blacks.

³⁷ Zephaniah Kingsley, *A treatise on the patriarchal system of society, as it exists in some governments and colonies in America, and in the United States, under the name of slavery, with its necessity and advantages*, 4th ed. [Florida?]: [s.n], 1834, 3.

than it would be with an equal number of free white people of ordinary means and condition.³⁸

Within his assessment of slavery, Kingsley was regarded as a defender of slavery and he also fought for the rights of slaves, however, within his defense of slavery he often provided an opinion of the benefit of holding humans in bondage. Like others who spoke favorably of slavery, Kingsley contended, “prudence and exertion” and he also insists, “how much advantage the country would derive from preaching up industry, economy, and local attachment.”³⁹ In other words, Kingsley utilized his role as an enlightened patriarch to produce both mental and bodily warfare on his slaves while attempting to justify his reasoning. Nevertheless, the perception of slavery was greatly aided in the interpretation of divine decree, for instance, many Proslavery Christians believed that through the curse of Cain, God had decreed slavery. The story of Noah and Ham can be found in the Old Testament, Genesis 9: 20-27, within the passage of scripture, the Bible informs us that Noah became a farmer after the flood, one day after he planted a vineyard, he became intoxicated.

While in this state he had become naked within his tent and was seen by his son Ham. Ham proceeded to tell his brothers, Shem, and Japheth of their father’s condition. Shem and Japheth backed into their father’s tent to cover him without them seeing their father in his condition, however, upon waking up the next day, Noah alludes to Ham doing something to him and pronounces a curse on his son. This perception of the Bible became the standard explanation for the origin of slavery by many pro-slavery Christians.

³⁸ Zephaniah Kingsley, *A treatise on the patriarchal system of society, as it exists in some governments and colonies in America, and in the United States, under the name of slavery, with its necessity and advantages*, 4th ed. [Florida?]: [s.n], 1834, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-22.

A South Carolina Episcopal clergyman, Frederick Dalcho wrote a pamphlet on this portion of the Bible in 1823. Dalcho stated, the inspiration for Noah's curse was divine because otherwise the "future condition of his idolatrous and wicked posterity" could not have been known by him. "The prophecy of Noah," Dalcho continues, "was to be fulfilled, not in the individuals named, but nationally in their descendants. Canaan's whole race was under the malediction." Thus, the descendants of Canaan, the Africans, were to be the "servants of servants." Dalcho continues, "the lowest state of servitude, slaves," to the descendants of Shem and Japheth, the present-day Jews, and Christians.⁴⁰

Dalcho also utilizes the insight of Bishop Newton, according to Dalcho, Newton interpreted the curse of Noah as "particularly implying *servitude* and *subjection*" within his *Dissertation on the Prophecies*. He also highlights the fact that Newton contends, "that the word "brethren" in Hebrew also meant more distant relations. "The descendants, therefore, of Canaan, were to be subject to the descendants of both Shem and Japheth . . . this is the burden of the prophecy."⁴¹ Another article by the Richmond Enquirer utilized Newton's work and stated that, "since the Africans were the descendants of Ham and "their slavery an accomplishment of Noah's prediction," which was "divinely inspired," then "the present condition of the African is inevitable; all efforts to extinguish black slavery are idle. . . ."⁴² Dalcho repeated this stance within his work and concluded that, "The Bible had also said that the Jews would be restored. However, nowhere in the Bible was there a prophecy which removed the curse of slavery from

⁴⁰ Frederick Dalcho, *Practical Considerations Founded on the Scriptures, Relative to the Slave Population of South Carolina by a South-Carolinian* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1823), 10-13; 15-17.

⁴¹ Ibid., 10-15; 15-17.

⁴² *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 3 December 1819. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

the descendants of Ham and Canaan.”⁴³ Therefore, from this perception, slavery was to continue indefinitely within the United States.

The Mosaic Law Defense: 1820’s

Within the confines of the Old Testament, the Mosaic Law was another major defense against slavery utilized by pro-slavery Christians. The theme of “Divine Sanction” emerged as an argument that defenders of slavery would point to as justification for the institution of slavery. It was claimed, that throughout the patriarchal period of Israel, God had tolerated and even ordained, the practice of holding slaves. Within the book of Leviticus, the 25th chapter, verses 44, 45, and 46 state, “Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, *shall be* of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall not rule one over another with rigor”⁴⁴ was quoted within many pro-slavery Christians circles as Richard Nisbet cited that, “these verses were quoted even more extensively in proslavery speeches and tracts than was the Curse on Canaan.”⁴⁵

This scripture presented one of the greatest Biblical justifications for Proslavery Christians, from the sanction of slavery to the buying and selling of slaves, as well as identifying them as a possession, and even the act of passing them down to their children as an inheritance forever provided sufficient evidence for their case. The Richmond Enquirer provides another example of the perception of the pro-slavery Christian. “The law of Moses was written “by the

⁴³ Frederick Dalcho, *Practical Considerations*, 19-20.

⁴⁴ Leviticus 25: 44-46, King James Version.

⁴⁵ Richard Nisbet, *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture Or a Defense of the West-India Planters from the Aspersion Thrown Out Against Them by the Author of a Pamphlet Entitled “An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America upon Slavekeeping,”* by a West Indian (Philadelphia: NP, 1773); Annals of Congress, 16 Cong., 1 sess., 26 January 1820, 269. *National Intelligencer*, 30 July 1819.

finger of the Almighty.” This had to be believed or else “flatly deny the whole of the Bible.”⁴⁶

This implication suggests that God commanded the selling and buying of slaves according to this observation. This stance was not limited to the voices of pro-slavery Christians, but even elected officials share their stance on the subject as well. In January 1828, Congressman John C.

Weems of Maryland asserted that the Leviticus scripture was proof that God recognized the “right of [slave] property by purchase.”⁴⁷ Within the book of Genesis, the 17th chapter, verse 27, “Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession”⁴⁸ thus, this verse was used as proof of Biblical support of buying slaves with money.

As slavery was debated in the state of Missouri, another pro-slavery Christian concluded:

The Southern people move like patriarchs of old, at the head of their children and grandchildren, their flocks and their herds, their “*bondmen*” and “*bondmaids*” to be an *inheritance for their children after them*,” to be “*their bondmen forever*,” They cannot go where they are holding this property by an uncertain tenure.⁴⁹

Within the confines of another pamphlet, *Personal Slavery Established by the Suffrages of Custom and Right Reason. Being a Full Answer to the Gloomy and Visionary Reveries, of all the Fanatical and Enthusiastic Writers on That Subject*, the author contends that, it is “highly probable that the Africans we enslave are descendants of the very same Heathen that were *round* about the Israelites.” Since these Africans remained unconverted and since the whites were “at least descended” from the Israelites, then the latter could enslave the former.

⁴⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 12 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

⁴⁷ *Congressional Debates*, 20 Cong., 1st sess., 10 January 1828, 967-68.

⁴⁸ Genesis 17:27, King James Version.

⁴⁹ *St. Louis Enquirer*, 29 April 1820.

“Will it be denied,” he argued, “that we are entitled to the liberty of enslaving the Africans and the Heathen *round about* us also?”⁵⁰

Consequently, the foundational motive for the Biblical defense of slavery has been emphasized by these scriptural passages as they were the basic argument used the most frequently by pro-slavery Christians. These scriptural passages were the building blocks in which defenders of slavery were able to build extensions of preliminary rationalization to support their views on slavery. Accordingly, they were able to create a formidable wall around the slaveholder’s stance as the Bible was their biggest defense tool used to justify the sanctioning of slavery. This logic also became a constant unrebuked practice by Proslavery Christians, as they proficiently used the Biblical patriarchs of Israel as their example of a Godly relationship towards slavery. For instance, Abraham who is known as the “Father of faith,” became the “Father of slavery,” by pro-slavery Christians as he became one of the notable examples that defenders of slavery utilized. He was considered, “the most faithful, obedient, humane, just, disinterested, righteous man,” as the author of the *Enquirer* insists, “this spotless patriarch who constantly obeyed the voice of God – kept his charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws, and found such acceptance with him as to be admitted to familiar conferences with Jehovah.”⁵¹

These discernments of the Bible took the word of God and the behavior of one of its important characters as confirmation that God was not displeased with defenders of slavery and their current conduct within slavery as they suggested that the Holy word did not openly oppose

⁵⁰ *Personal Slavery Established by the Suffrages of Custom and Right Reason. Being a Full Answer to the Gloomy and Visionary Reveries, of all the Fanatical and Enthusiastical Writers on That Subject* (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1773, 11.

⁵¹ Frederick Dalcho, *Practical Considerations*, 22-23.

slavery, nor was it a violation of the statutes of Jehovah. The author from the *Richmond Enquirer* resolved:

For how a sincere believer can imagine, that consistently with the ideas that faithful Christians cherish concerning the essential rectitude of God in whom abides the plenitude of justice, that he would especially style himself the God of Abraham – *dignify* him with the appellation of a friend – *deign* to declare that in his seed he would bless all nations; *affirm* that Abraham, had obeyed his voice – kept his charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws – *without exception* – or that the blessed Redeemer would have commended the works of Abraham without *any restriction* – if Abraham’s moral conduct in becoming a slaveholder had been deemed repugnant to any precept or clause in the code of the Supreme Lawgiver?⁵²

This perception insists on slavery and its sanction as a positive ordained by God as the author also contends, “it amounts to a positive sanction of this usage.”⁵³ Defenders of slavery latched onto the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis as well. In the 47th chapter, verses 13 through 25 tell the story of how Joseph constructed a strategy to deliver Egypt out of a burdensome famine. Joseph arrived in Egypt in slavery as his brothers grew tired of the favor that he received from their father Joseph, who was the grandson of Abraham. Joseph told his brothers of a dream that he had, in which they would bow before him. Informing his brothers, who were all older than him did not go over well and they devised a plan to sell him into slavery. Once Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was able to discern a dream en route to gaining favor with Pharaoh, which in turn allowed him to be second in command. Eventually, famine threatens the Kingdom of Egypt and within this drought, the citizens willingly trade their goods for corn and other necessities. Joseph created an equitable system for exchange as the demand was much greater than the supply:

And there *was* no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *all* the land of Canaan fainted because of the famine. And Joseph gathered up

⁵² *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 20 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

⁵³ *Ibid.*

all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? For the money faileth. And Joseph said, Give your cattle, and I will give you for your cattle if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in *exchange* for horses, and the flocks, and the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. When that year ended, they came unto him the second year and said unto him, We will not hide *it* from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath out herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give *us* seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land is not desolate. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaohs. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from *one* end of the borders of Egypt even to the *other* end thereof. Only the land of the priests had a portion *assigned them* of Pharaoh and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, *here is* seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the author of the *Richmond Enquirer* characterizations of Joseph paints a picture of him as, “the most extensive purchaser of African slaves that ever existed. Joseph was able to purchase more African servants at one time than any of the slaveholders in the “*confederated empire*.”⁵⁵ Thus, within the margins of the *Richmond Enquirer*, the author provides an assertion of Joseph that is delivered to the readers as a way not only to perceive that Joseph took part in the slave trade within these passages of scripture, but also as a way to operate with a method that provided a revisionist account on this Biblical story. The power of the pen allowed pro-slavery Christians to construct views of the Bible that fit nicely into their rationale. Slaves did not have the power to eliminate the circumstances of these perceptions that were diseased. The Hermeneutics of the *Richmond Enquirer* helped established a dedicated genre of

⁵⁴ Genesis 47: 13-25, King James Version.

⁵⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 20 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

Proslavery Christians theory that was motivated to practice these methods of perception or philosophy as their affiliate.

This branch of theology was not at all Biblical, sound, or even constantly. It was convenient and presented a path with the least amount of resistance as another edition of the *Richmond Enquirer* in 1820 argued that, “the very first law enacted by God himself after giving Moses the Ten Commandments dealt with the regulation of slaveholding.”⁵⁶ In the book of Exodus, the 21st chapter, the first six verses states:

Now these *are* the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh, he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in. by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul, and he shall serve him forever.⁵⁷

Within *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture* by Richard Nisbet, he uses verses 21 and 22 of the same chapter of the Bible that states:

Notwithstanding, if he continues a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he *is* his money. If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from *her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*.⁵⁸

Nisbet insists that, “the portion of the scripture that states “for he is his money” supports the mentality that slaves were property as he believes that the slave was viewed similarly to the ox or an ass within the Bible. He also asserts that “Moses did not esteem the murder of a slave as a “capital offense” but simply an act that is punishable by a “pecuniary

⁵⁶ Richard Nisbet, *Slavery Not Forbidden*, 4-5

⁵⁷ Exodus 21: 1-6, King James Version.

⁵⁸ Exodus 21: 21-22, King James Version.

fine.”⁵⁹ The fact that Joseph developed a stockpiling system to store the grain for use during a drought or the reality of Moses bringing the Hebrews out of bondage is not just convenient omissions on the part of the author of the *Richmond Enquirer*, but it was part of a skillset that allowed to defenders of slavery to openly express a Christian disposition.

The Emphasis of the Old Testament: 1820's

In February of 1820, the *Richmond Enquirer* and its pro-slavery Christians author utilization of the Old Testament of the Bible presented many perceptions that operated as support to their cause. These defenders of slavery would treat the word “servant” as equal to the word “slave.” In the book of Genesis, the 30th chapter and the 43rd verse the Bible states, “And the man increased exceedingly and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.”⁶⁰ This verse was used by slaveholders to show that Jacob owned slaves like his father Abraham. Even within the Ten Commandments, slaveholders were able to utilize the 17th verse of the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbor’s.”⁶¹ Which allowed slaveholders to emphasize “manservant” and “maidservant” within that verse. In the book of Ecclesiastes, the 2nd chapter, and the 7th verse, the Bible states, “I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me.”⁶² which slaveholders use as a rationalization to slaves being born in their homes.

In the book of Genesis, in the 27th chapter, and the 29th verse, the bible states, “Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s

⁵⁹ Richard Nisbet, *Slavery Not Forbidden*, 4-5.

⁶⁰ Genesis 30: 43, King James Version.

⁶¹ Exodus 20:17, King James Version.

⁶² Ecclesiastes 2:7, King James Version.

sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.”⁶³ Another scripture that the defenders of slavery used to shape their narrative, the blessing of Isaac came to Jacob after he and his mother manipulated and deceived his brother and father.

In the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 21, verses 11 through 14, the Bible asserts:

And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails, And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that, thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.⁶⁴

Made for a supportive illustration that defenders of slavery use within their arsenal.⁶⁵

Within the confines of the book of Joshua, the 9th chapter, verses 23 and 27 the Bible assert:

Now, therefore, ye *are* cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose⁶⁶

This verse worked as a method to claim that Africans were the descendants of the Gibeonites whom Joshua had cursed.⁶⁷ The *Richmond Enquirer* in its February 12th, 1820, edition utilized the entire 10th chapter of the book of Joshua to speak to the battle in which the Israelites won for the possession of their inheritance of slaves.⁶⁸ Pro-slavery Christians asserted that there was no negative disposition of slavery within the Old Testament of the Bible. This perception was used as a positive and reinforced their agenda of holding Africans and their

⁶³ Genesis 27:29, King James Version.

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 21: 11-14, King James Version.

⁶⁵ “Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia from Brunswick County, November 10, 1785” in F.T. Schmidt and B. R. Wilhelm, eds., “Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly* (January 1973) 30, 142-44.

⁶⁶ Joshua 9: 23, 27.

⁶⁷ *Controversy Between Caius Gracchus and Opimius in Reference to the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Georgetown, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1827), 20.

⁶⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 12 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

descendants in bondage while contending that the Bible held no negative perception of slavery within its margins. Whether via the prophets, the wonders of God, or even in the inheritance of blessings, God had not condemned slavery in any fashion and the Christianity of America embraced this perception within the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The use of the Bible by slaveholders was multilayered and many scriptures were diseased by this perception. The desire to be inclined to see these historical events as a vehicle fit for recovering truth within an objective space is threatened by the perception of those men and women willing to align their sin with God's will.

The relationship between Christianity and slavery provides puzzling dispositions of the Bible, while the nurturing of cruel intentions by American slaveholders speaks to the masterly associated with Chattel slavery's overall endurance. The appearance of different beliefs, customs, and traditions complicates the dynamic of the two institutions. Defending slavery became a habitual duty for those who insisted that the Bible permitted the right of slaveholders to have rule over enslaved Africans. In the New World slaves were confronted with a world of shifting norms and displeasure with the idea of objectivity, their oppression was a stable of life that held concepts and identifiable stances that pro-slavery Christians retained. Without these norms, no fruitful interpretation of the Bible impacted their stance on ethics, which reduced the moral perspectives within their actions. The profiles of the moral thinkers within this period provides a collection of interpretations of the Bible that took hold to exemplifying the Christian lifestyle as one that gave permission to slaveholders and their supporters to sets roots in a system of racism. The nourishment of this perception of the Bible led to ethics with widespread roots that twisted the moral tree within the institution of slavery. The defenders of slavery became

moral teachers who expounded on the word of God with selfish means to accomplish an universal benefit for themselves and their children.

The Emphasis New Testament as a Major Defense of slavery: 1819-1820's

In much stronger terms than the Old Testament prominence, the sanction of slavery was more intense when it came to the New Testament perception of the behavior of pro-slavery Christians. The argument for a proslavery stance came on the heels of the fact that Jesus Christ came to fulfill and not to destroy the Old Testament perspective. This reality came as a resource and a tool by the defenders of slavery as they openly argued that Christ sanctioned the institution of slavery since slavery existed in Rome and Jesus didn't address or condemn it. Thus, slaveholders considered slavery acceptable since there is no direct condemnation. An article was printed in the *Richmond Enquirer*, on December 3, 1819, which contended, "since Christ had spoken nothing against the slavery existing under Mosaic law and since He "came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill," then slavery [was] acceptable."⁶⁹ The article also asked an profound question:

If domestic slavery had been deemed by Jesus Christ the atrocious crime which it is now represented to be, could it have been passed over without censure? Would the doctrines of salvation have been illustrated by a reference to it, direct and unequivocal? – should we not have been told, not that the rich man, but that the slave-holders, could not enter the kingdom of heaven?⁷⁰

This perception was one that held the stance of Jesus Christ sanctioning slavery, which spoke to their desire to represent an approach to ethics that operated with moral theorists as superficial instructions rather than impactful advice. For instance, in the book of Luke, chapter 7, verses 1 through 10, the Bible asserts:

⁶⁹ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 3 December 1819. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-12-03/ed-1/seq-2/>>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.⁷¹

Many Proslavery Christians” took the perception of this passage of scripture as an avenue to suggest that Christ accepted the institution of slavery since he willingly healed the servant and did nothing for him in terms of his bondage. This line of reasoning as the defenders of slavery esteemed that the “fundamental precepts” of the Old Testament were not altered by the activities of the New Testament led to an poor perception of the Bible. The edition of the *Richmond Enquirer*, 3 December 1819 contends that “Tenures of involuntary service were not condemned or prohibited by the great luminaries of the New Testament.”⁷² The author also contended that the “Gospel dispensation is exhibited as *never interfering with any of the civil institutions or political establishments of the world.*”⁷³

Roman slavery had to be known by Jesus, which seems to be the main perception of the publication as they highlighted occasions in which Jesus addressed slavery. In the book of Matthew, the 22nd chapter verses 15 through 21, the Bible states:

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*: for

⁷¹ Luke 7:1-10, King James Version.

⁷² *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 3 December 1819. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.lccn/sn84024735/1820-12-03/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

⁷³ Ibid.

thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.⁷⁴

Within this passage of scripture, the *Richmond Enquirer* author argued that Jesus knew of slavery but wasn't interested in intervening in any solution of such an institution.⁷⁵ The author of the *Richmond Enquirer* goes on to assert this notion with another instance in which Jesus teaches a parable to his followers which speaks of a servant being beaten by his master.⁷⁶ In the book of Luke, the 12th chapter, verses 41 through 47, the Bible states:

Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. Bit and if that servant says in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.⁷⁷

Richard Nisbet contended that Jesus's "general charity and benevolence" should not or could not be regarded as "proofs against slavery." He asserts, "If the custom had been held in abhorrence by Christ and his disciples, they would, no doubt, have preached against it in direct terms. They were remarkable for the boldness of their discourse, and intrepidity of conduct."⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Matthew 22:15-21, King James Version.

⁷⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁷ Luke 12: 41-47, King James Version.

⁷⁸ Richard Nisbet, *Slavery Not Forbidden*, 8.

In 1828, the *Southern Review* asserted that the Christian religion had nothing to do with slavery “except, indeed, that the total silence of its Divine Author upon the subject and the positive injunction of obedience upon bondmen seem to make the inference inevitable, that he considered the institution as altogether a matter of political expediency.”⁷⁹ The stance of pro-slavery Christians” can be explained by Reverend Richard Furman. *In Exposition of the Views of the Baptists*, he asserted, “if slaveholding had been considered evil, then Christ or the Apostles would not have “tolerated it for a moment in the Christian Church.”⁸⁰ He also states, “In proving this subject justifiable by Scriptural authority, its morality is also proved; for the Divine Law never sanctions immoral actions.”⁸¹ Anne C. Loveland looks at Richard Furman’s “*Question on Slavery*,’ ” *Baptist History and Heritage*”, citing this letter, “is not a sin, a Moral Evil. For God never did, and never will authorize men to commit Sin.”⁸² However, Frederick Dalcho contended, “*obedience, submission, [and] subjection, to a bad, as well as to a good master.*”⁸³ Which worked to assist his argument, he also insisted, “nothing in the law of God which can, in the slightest manner, justify the disobedience and revolt of slaves.”⁸⁴ According to an number of defenders and pro-slavery Christians, the New Testament contained several sanctions for slavery.

Outside of the 4 gospels, another source of scriptures that pro-slavery Christians” deemed to be acceptable as far as the New Testament was concerned, was the Epistle of St. Paul to Philemon. The Pauline Mandate, as it was often referred to, speaks to Onesimus who was a slave to Philemon, Onesimus ran away from his master, fleeing to Rome where he was converted by St. Paul. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master, which was a point of great emphasis by pro-

⁷⁹ *Southern Review* (February 1828), 233.

⁸⁰ Richard Furman, *Exposition of the Views of the Baptists*, 7-8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁸² Anne C. Loveland, “Richard Furman’s ‘Questions on Slavery,’ ” *Baptist History and Heritage* (July 1975), 178.

⁸³ Frederick Dalcho, *Practical Considerations*, 25.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

slavery Christians.” In the book of Philemon, the 1st chapter, verses 10 through 15, the epistle states,

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me: Whom I have sent again: thou, therefore, receive him, that is, mine own bowels: Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he, therefore, departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever;⁸⁵ Dalcho utilizes this scripture as well as he contends, “All the sophistry in the world cannot get rid of this decisive example. Christianity robs no man of his rights, and Onesimus was the property of his master, under the laws of his country, which must be obeyed, if not contrary to the laws of God.”⁸⁶

The Apostle’s Paul epistle to the Corinthians received prominence from pro-slavery Christians. Within the letter to the Corinthians, the 7th chapter, the 20th, and 24th verse states, “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God”⁸⁷ This verse stood to mean that slaves should be happy with, and for better or worse, make the best of their condition, within the perception of slaveholders, defenders of slavery, and pro-slavery Christians. The pro-slavery Christians identified several quotations from the New Testament which was utilized to justify the institution of slavery. Paul’s work was used as a way to represent moral restraint on the actions of slaveholders, within their outlining their perception of Paul’s work, the desire to present that slaveholders were merciful was an common assertion.

An evocative charge of the role of Christians who supported and defended slavery sees that their focus was to appeal to authority rather than the spirit of Christianity. Pro-slavery Christians constructed a defense that rested on the belief that only those things were sinful that

⁸⁵ Philemon 1: 10-15, *King James Version*.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 7: 20 and 24, *King James Version*.

broke a direct law of God. The Bible was seen as a source of validation for slavery, as Southern Evangelicals viewed its contents as providing a road map for everyday living.⁸⁸ The appeal to authority remained the emphasis of the defenders of slavery. Additionally, many pro-slavery Christians were convinced that Northerners and anti-slavery Christians were abandoning the Bible on the other hand. Senator William Smith of South Carolina claimed that he would not be “astonished” to find that Northerners were attempting “a new version of the old and New Testaments,”⁸⁹ in January of 1820. Defenders of slavery sought the work of Paul to provide clarity to their right towards owning slaves. They cited the Apostle's indifference to slavery as validation that social concerns favored a master-slave relationship. The passages of Paul's letters reveal both historically and Biblically that these observations have a pragmatic ideology that is constructed with a heterodox approach. Paul's concern with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ should not be seen as his condoning slavery, his overwhelming theme is centered on the soon return of Jesus Christ, therefore, everything else was subordinate and secondary.

Thus, with this in mind, the Bible in terms of history, and from the lens of antiquity, must be seen with an perception that addresses the oppressive forms of slavery within the United States were in no way, shape, or form like the slavery of the Bible. Several noticeable individuals who were slaves in the Bible's period enjoyed vital jobs such as teachers, writers, politicians, artisans, and philosophers—slaves within this system of slavery often labored in bondage for 10 to 20 years and were able to purchase their freedom. Within this system, some were financially better off than many who were not slaves. Additionally, the importance of preaching the Gospel in light of the soon return of Jesus took priority over the social order for Paul, Peter, and the other authors of the New Testament. In the book of Corinthian Paul looks at the return of Jesus

⁸⁸ Donald Matthews, *Religion in the Old South*, 157, 175.

⁸⁹ *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1st sess., 26 January 1820, 268-70.

as an event that would happen in his lifetime, as he advises them to stay in their current marriage state, “married or single” in verses 26-31. In doing so, Paul provides clarity to his stance on slavery as his perspective on marriage was based upon his expectation that Jesus would return. The arrival of the Holy Spirit within the New Testament also provokes the Apostles to speak of the Kingdom of Heaven, this feature worked to ensure that individuals lived a life outside of the presents of sin.

Therefore, the Spirit of God and its authority over sin required that slaves be treated as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Thus, the perception of the Bible must align with the revolutionary respect for Christianity providing slaves with a new paradigm. The exhortations within the New Testament of the Bible provide a stewardship approach to all aspects of life including slavery. Within this observation, the fact that many New World slave owners justified their abusive and ungodly behaviors with Biblical passages speaks to the desire to accommodate the desires of their hearts and not the perception of the Bible. The reality is that institution of slavery was a recognized and profoundly traditional part of Roman society while the chattel slavery of America was an outsourcing affair that polluted the country. Holding fast to their right to apprehend enslaved Africans in bondage also required a defense, and this defense involved several distinctive methodology approaches.

The use of the Bible permitted pro-slavery Christians, defenders of slavery, and slaveholders a source of inspiration that inspired them to view the holy writ as their case study for their conduct. These approaches gave way to a religious philosophy that excused moral contradictions, removed accountability for sin, and empowered this sect of individuals with self-interest virtues that undermined the Bible at every turn. For one can be predominantly immoral while proclaiming to be morally sound when their perception gives room for ignorance. The

affinities and differences among these agents of oppression are numerous, and the defenders of slavery compose of many who identified as Christians, yet the way their conduct is remembered is far too often overlooked, simplified, and suggested as productive living for their time.

Productive learning tools reside in the fact that locating valuable comparisons and differences of history provides the framework for making linkages among divergences in time. Valid moral judgments ultimately are based on the history of ideas and are the base in which individuals have anchored the legitimacy of their ethical systems. The internal rationale of defending slavery with the Bible created multiple theories in order to give nuance and complexity to the perception of slavery as an ethical way of living.

With perceptions such as these, one sees the breadth and depth of the ethics of slavery as a whole, and its challenges as a burden on the slave. This legacy of requiring the victim to defend himself has challenged the way we critique the past and leaves personal perspectives as acceptable evidence of Christianity that receives little to no criticism with its involvement in slavery. The core of morality is constructed with the act of treating people fairly, within slavery the consideration of slaves was restricted, yet the insistence of Christianity is the evidence of the demand of slavery. There can never be a moral defense of slavery within a proper approach to Christianity, the abusive tone within the insistence of the perception of the Bible left slaveholders with rationale for cruelty. The teachings of Jesus Christ should be based on his extreme human connection in which he was compelled to step out of heaven and join humanity in its role to remove sin from separating us from God. Slavery in the hands of pro-slavery saints maximized harm and minimized the slaves access to happiness. Therefore, the practice of informing slaves that their happiness would come in the next life provided a perception that the

Bible sanctioned slavery. The philosophy of Christianity within the period of slavery in the United States consistently championed the virtues of oppression in disguise as values of peace.

Conclusion

The challenge set forth by the Abolitionists movement was met by pro-slavery Christians who included among other things, economics, history, religion, legality, social good, and humanitarianism. When discussing slavery in the New Testament one must differentiate between how it was practiced among pagans and Jews. Pro-slavery Christians further their argument with a stance on their perception of the Bible as one that they argued saw them unwilling to end slavery within the South. There would be widespread unemployment and chaos if all the slaves were freed, pro-slavery Christians insisted. An increase in insurrections, uprisings, and another uncontrolled conflicts would be the result of emancipation. They pointed to the slave revolts as evidence of the Biblical justification of slavery and argued for a continuation of the status quo of slavery. Their affluence and stability insisted that enslaved Africans work in poor conditions as they enjoyed the bounty of the society of slavery. Pro-slavery Christians quarreled that slavery had survived throughout the history of men and that the natural state of Africans was under the guidance of a superior race. The Romans had slaves, the Greeks had slaves, and even Africans had slaves, they reasoned.

Pro-slavery Christians happily noted that within the Bible, important men such as Abraham had slaves, they insisted that the Ten Commandments supported the institution of slavery with words such as “manservant” and “maidservant.” They offered Paul as verification of slavery within the confines of the New Testament, his stance on Simone returning to his master Philemon was of the utmost importance to pro-slavery Christians. In fact, within their perception of the Bible, they believed that Jesus himself didn’t address slavery during his earthly ministry

even though slavery was widespread in Roman society. Therefore, they argued that slavery was divine, that it was the prudence of God, and that the institution brought Christianity to the heathen. According to their arguments, slavery was a good thing for the enslaved, it gave them jobs, shelter, healthcare, and a sense of purpose. In the end, pro-slavery Christians reasoned that slavery allowed these helpless souls to be redeemed, restored, and delivered to a life in which their counterparts never received such blessings.

Pro-slavery Christians argued that slaves were better cared for in comparison with the poor of Europe and the workers in the Northern states. Slaveholders held onto an ideology that they served a parental role in the lives of slaves as they protected slaves and provided for them as they were sick and got old. Slavery has operated like a shapeshifter within the confines of history, every version of slavery within history points to the conflict between the moral right and the individual interest. At the expense of slaves, slaveholders and others spoke of the good work of slavery and its importance while understanding that its benefits in the eyes of many Christians outweighed any of its negative associations. In fact, within the English language, one can locate the spectrum of slavery within the various words used to identify a person as a slave, you have words such as servant, bondservant, indentured servant, employee, staff, serf, and peasant. Most of these words have a connotation that is viewed as negative.

The complications of slavery can be expressed in the relationship between Christianity and slavery as the disease of perception transformed the defense of slavery. The totality of the disease of perception altered how individuals were able to defend an institution that rendered a lifetime of servitude while preaching freedom. For instance, within Paul's communication that is captured in the book of Timothy, the master-slave relationship can be seen as being promoted. Paul states, "All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their masters

as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.”⁹⁰

Within this passage the Apostle does not denounce the evil of slavery, nor does he assert the ills of such an institution. This gray area of scripture provided a lane in which pro-slavery Christians maneuvered as the distance of space and time reveals their intentions. Their perception of this verse produced an alignment of thought that increased their disposition on their perceived high moral ground within the structure of slavery. In many ways their perception of the Bible allowed them to look down on others and insisted that their way of living was a divine and holy approach.

There were many ways that a person come to become a slave in Old Testament times among pagan nations as well as among the Jews. A review of the book of Genesis provides several examples. Within the 14th chapter of Genesis, as the result of war individuals were taken into captivity— in the 15th chapter one can discover individuals being born into slavery—in chapter 17th there is mention of individuals being sold into slavery. Therefore, when discussing slavery in the Old Testament one must also differentiate between how it was practiced among the Gentiles and Jews. Notwithstanding, the slaves within the Biblical period were property that could be bought and sold like slavery within the United States. We must be cautious, however, in the way we see slavery of the Bible, in that we comprehend that slavery in the 18th-19th century was not the same as the slavery of the Roman Empire in the Bible.

Slavery in the United States was constructed to create an economic factor that was strong in the Southern states. With no rights or any chances for freedom, slaves in America were not considered fully human and often were outsourced via kidnapping. The poor perception of the Bible by pro-slavery Christians and defenders of slavery has permitted the legacy of slavery

⁹⁰ 1Timothy 6:1, *King James Bible Version*.

to be viewed as an element of the past that bares no significance to the present. Inside of the perceptions of men seeking to remain in power, the abuse of being considered property cemented the tragedy of viewing the Bible as a supporter of slavery within America Christian thought.

Chapter 5 The Assumptions of Slavery

Within the relationship between Christianity and slavery, there is an assumption that Christianity defended slaves and critiqued the actions of slaveholders and pro-slavery Christians. This assumption has led to a revisionist account of Christianity within the United States, as well as providing theories that have birthed a pattern of presumptuous. The delivery of these approaches has covered, investigated, and explained away the complications of slavery existing in a country built on the percepts of a Christian God. Hidden under the rug of shame, denial, and disgrace, the legacy of the relationship between Christianity and slavery demands accurate assessments of this bond between these two institutions. Another historical assumption has come in the belief that slaves easily converted to Christianity, especially during the Second Great Awakening. The fact that slaves were forbidden to read and write or the reality of slaves receiving their introduction to Christianity from their oppressors tends to be overlooked. The evidence of different religions predating their association with Africans and those enslaved are disregarded as well. Even the factual observation of the rejection of Christianity by slaves is perceived as an infrequent occasion. Did slaves fully embrace Christianity, and in what way did Christianity perpetuate slavery are the driving examination within this portion of this study, the degree to which cooperation was willfully expressed or forcefully directed are difficult statistics to locate and present as evidence to the jury, however, when considering the totality of the perspective of slavery from those who were oppressed. The inability to offer a singular explanation sees the analysis of these assumptions as logical inquiries into the history of the relationship between slavery and America's Christianity.

Introduction

The history of America has been influenced by the institution of slavery and its lasting impact on a country that readily associates color with worth. Many have sought to investigate the perspective of those men, women, and children, who were the victims of slavery. The degree to which Christianity has been associated with the ability of those oppressed people to overcome slavery has been a major subject that historians have investigated. The common belief that slaves converted to Christianity is not just a biased assessment, it is a notion that lacks actual researched evidence. The desire of the English and American churches to Christianize and civilize slaves to learn the way to salvation must be taken into consideration as the documentation of conversions in many cases were in the hands of slaveholders, their associates, or a party that was pro-slavery under the regional influence. African tribes were conquered, and men, women, and children were enslaved in the name of Jesus. Slaves were made to know their Savior through the intense inhumane and impartial treatment of slavery. Learning the lessons of heaven from vicious people who benefited from teaching slaves perseverance, obedience, and self-control often are tales reserved for footnotes within the story of slavery.

Slaves were made to occupy an extreme version of servitude labor that when coupled with Christian beliefs often produced a fable-like revisionist account. Sadly, a combination of American history practices and certain American historians practiced a manner of misrepresenting truths about African Americans. These practices have led to the distortion of many aspects of slavery that have either been falsehoods or fabrications. Within the confines of the antebellum South as well as their Northern allies, the community of enslaved Africans and their descendants have been historically presented as followers of Christ. These stereotypes associated with a large percentage of unfair judgment have been placed on a race of people with

a miscarriage of justice and an overly emphasized perspective within the overall discipline of history. When we factor in that slaveholders used the bible to justify their treatment of those enslaved, that it was illegal for slaves to read and write, and that their interpretation of the Bible was mostly consumed with instructions. We can contend that the practice of citing scripture and commanding servants to obey was not objectively performed. Therefore, it is with this hope that the resistance to surrender to these bias assessments requires several considerations when analyzing the remembered past.

The Atlantic slave trade did not begin slavery, Africa has a long history with the trade of humans. With routes that traversed the Sahara, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean to reach markets in North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Indian subcontinent, practices of slavery existed prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth century respectively. However, the domination of the Atlantic slave trade changed the nature of the slave market in Africa, making it, by the time of the West African jihads, an engine of the continents' economy.¹ Therefore, the investigation of slavery and its relationship with Christianity cannot be assumed that its origins began in America. With faiths that traversed the middle passage, the British Colonies, and the Antebellum South, the religious practices of enslaved Africans were not one-dimensional, predictable, and devoutly Christian. To rationalize the assumptions of Christian thought when pertaining to slavery and the abundant evidence that all slaves did not follow Christ, offers a stance to the contradictory beliefs that are associated with both institutions. The actions of many slaveholders are irreconcilable, yet most interpreters of their character wish to resolve or explain their actions of life as a paradox. Self-scrutinization of the past provides insight into the present

¹ Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 21, and 104.

and hopefully informs the future as the endless research of the relationship between Christianity and slavery requires earnest investigations.

Pre-Colonial Africa

Notably, historian John Thornton argued for the need to understand the religious lives of Africans before enslavement. With their forced relocation to America, his positioning focused on West-Central Africa in general. Primary in the kingdom of Kongo in the mid-fifteenth century as the country encountered Portuguese explorers. The Kongolesse ruling elite had been converted to Catholicism by missionaries within a few decades after first contact, Thornton asserts that the number of conversions had extended to the point of turning the Kingdom into a Catholic society by the mid-sixteenth century. For Thornton, the number of conversions of Kongos reflected the willingness of Africans themselves to embrace Catholicism. This is a debatable assertion and can be manipulated to support one's theory or theories. However, he contends that these actions support the opinion that Catholicism wasn't imposed on them by Portuguese conquerors and their missionary allies.²

West-Central Africans, Thornton contends, adopted Catholicism on their terms, for their purposes. Reinforcing his narrative, he declares:

both cultures (West-Central Africans and Europeans) accepted the basic reality of religion: that there was another world that could not be seen and that revelations were the essential source by which people could know of this other world.” Urging less emphasis on the “cosmological differences” among traditional West-Central African religions and that of Catholicism, he contends for more focus on their shared emphasis on “revelation.” “Because they received ‘co-revelations,’ that is, revelation on the African tradition that dovetailed with the Christian tradition. The conversion was accepted because Christians also accepted this particular set of revelations as valid.”³

² John K. Thornton, (John Kelly). *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250-1820*, 25.

³ John. Thornton, "The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750." *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 2 (1984), 147-67.

Consequently, within Thornton's argument, he contends that this specific encounter resulted in producing an Africanized Christianity. Thus, in West-Central Africa the development of Christian Africans resulted from a chance encounter with mutual agreement over religion. Catholicism is a rigid orthodoxy, which brings into question how so many of their sacraments were disregarded in this evolution. For instance, traditional priests existed, but they executed considerably less authority than the rigid Christian clerics. Of course, the lack of authority prevented the maintenance of Catholicism. Nonetheless, it is suggested that "revelations" led to a fluid and dynamic religious tradition. A tradition that was receptive to European religions that suggest the overcoming of fundamental barriers. Like language, the insertion of traditions, and the staggering disconnect that typically exists between human beings from different backgrounds. Thornton's work stresses a theory that many enslaved Africans were practicing Christianity before the Middle Passage. Thus, he implies that slave life and slave culture in America had implications of a chance encounter with peaceful conquerors that calmly influenced West-Central Africa's faith.

In a separate article, Thornton contends, that Catholicism shaped the Stono Rebellion in "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," for *The American Historical Review* 96, no 4 in 1991. This rebellion of Kongo slaves in South Carolina in 1739 unwittingly portrays these Kongolese as having a different religion, Vodou is seen as their way of faith.⁴ A native of my home state and a professor at the University of Wisconsin (Madison), John H. Sweet challenges Thornton's work. Sweet a historian with a transatlantic influence agrees with the reality that, "Africa must be the starting point for any study of Africans in the diaspora, particularly during

⁴ John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion." *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991), 1101-113.

the era of the slave trade.”⁵ For most Africans, Sweet asserts, including the Kongoleses, “traditional religion, not Christianity, informed “the institutions that Africans created’ and provided “them with a prism through which to interpret and understand their condition as slaves and as freed peoples,”⁶ with implications for other New World regions, but focusing primarily on seventeenth-century Brazil. Nevertheless, these regions depended on the steady importation of African slaves. Sweet insists that Africans “utilized” a variety of specific “Angolan,’ and especially Mbundu beliefs, and ritual practices. These beliefs produced prophecies, ordeals, ritual burials, dietary restrictions, and cures that served as a way in which slaves addressed their servitude within slavery.”⁷ African religions were independent systems of thought practiced despite their oppression and Christianity being held over their heads.⁸

Differing in large part regarding the processes of Christianization among Africans in the diaspora, Sweet and Thornton focus on different aspects of the reach of Christianity in Africa. The broader cosmology is ignored in Thornton’s assertion and the emphasis on “revelation” is very much a central focus within his study. While Sweet study, “downplays the real essence of Central Africa religious thought.” Furthering himself with Thornton, Sweet urges, that even though Catholicism did rely on revelation, the church in general “considered revelation to be extraordinarily rare and the miraculous expressions of God’s will on earth.” The Kongoleses, by contrast, “depended upon continuous revelation for their daily survival.”⁹ Sweet discerns that this difference amounted to opposing cosmologies, For instance, “constant dialogue between laypeople and the spirit world,” was not a shared practice.¹⁰ This practice became the primary

⁵ James H.. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 1441-1770.

⁶ Ibid., 1445.

⁷ Ibid., 1446.

⁸ Ibid., 1446-47.

⁹ Ibid., 1441-1770.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1710.

target of Catholic crusades of many European Catholic conversion missions. Overall, it could be viewed that the fundamental part of African Christianity has been obscured to diminish African faith in attempts to justify oppression within the shadows of Christianity. Sweet insists that “the broad Central Africa cosmology” endured “the dominant religious paradigm for most Kongolese.”¹¹ At best, Sweet suggests that “Christianity served as a parallel system of belief that complemented Kongolese worldviews.”¹² Therefore, these Central African's arrival to the New World and the institution of slavery was not accompanied by Christianity, but rather the African rituals and beliefs of Africa were relied on in enduring their hardships.¹³

A reexamination of conversion is required as the prominent role of laypersons in spreading Christian belief and practice in West-Central Africa may or may not be accurate. The stripping away of tradition and the imposition of an alien faith poses many concerns. Suggesting that a voluntary act of conversion on the part of Africans convinced by a spontaneous acceptance of one aspect of faith, “Revelation” and departing from their gods and embracing other deities that were not identical to their own are worrisome theories. Suggesting that Africans blended their cosmology with an understanding of the universe from foreigners brings questions to the underlining motives. Additionally, discounting that Christianity was a foreign and exclusively white religion when it touched the continent of Africa does not yield impartial assessments. Thus, when these African men and women reach the New World and endured the deceptions of the Middle Passage, I believe it would be best to view Christianity as part of their oppression in America. Sweet and others have worked to present that Christianity might share compatibilities with features of African religions. Nevertheless, assumptions should not be utilized in

¹¹ James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 1710.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1710.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1710.

contributing to legitimate various reasons in examining the conversion of Africans and enslaved Africans to Christianity.

While we can connect the dots with the welcoming converts from the black and white working population that the Methodists and the Baptists suddenly were presented with, the recognition of the impact of slavery and Christianity provided an unparalleled conflict that presented challenges to the faith of enslaved Africans and their descendants. How could the preaching of salvation through a Savior who dies for everybody's sin, justify the institution of slavery? Slave owners initially resisted evangelicals preaching to their bonds people fearing the Christian message of spiritual equality. Nevertheless, a few felt compelled to teach their slaves about the Bible as the revival movement spread. Many have concluded that in accepting America as home, this reality required the generation of African Americas who were removed from their homeland to grow into an understanding of the oppression of this land with significant reliance on the principles of Christianity. Therefore, for their reasons, it is suggested that African Americans played a major role in their conversion. Yet, the reality of Africans who were brought to America being able to freely possess the religion of their forefathers cannot be accurately equated, yet the resistance to the acceptance of Christianity is not a narrative that has been a popular theme.¹⁴

Although these studies have worked to offer impactful insight into traditional practices, their focus on the twentieth century has constructed assumptions of the character of African religions overall. Within this new wave of studying the impact of Christianity In Africa, a different stance on exploring the conversion of enslaved Africans has raised different inquiries into their religious practices. With the ability to fully comprehend that all human societies make

¹⁴ Wayne C Booth, Gregory G Colomb, and Joseph M Williams, *The Craft of Research*, Third Edition, 56.

cosmological adjustments, the ritual changes that Africans responded with see the significant alteration within the external and internal conditions of slaves' lives. Consequently, identifying the arrival of Christianity on the shores of the continent doesn't necessarily confirm the acceptance of Christianity from Africa and Africans, it highlights the dark motive of the intentions of foreigners in the country. The existence of Christianity was accompanied by the arrival of Islam within Africa and these groups of people either accepted these religions whole or oftentimes in parts.

The Assumptions within the New World

The land of America was vast when the first colonized Europeans encounter these lands. With a harsh frontier and a shortage of labor, white bondservants were shipped across the ocean, their services didn't supply adequate solutions. Tensions rose and the native people rapidly became rivals, and the practice of using bond servants lost its luster. Soon after, Dutch ships loaded with Africans in the early seventeenth century introduced a solution. The New World in the colonized British America introduced Africans to several oppressions that still are the elements and aspects that their ancestors currently encounter. Within the centuries to come the movement of force servitude went unchallenged and was openly accepted by all levels of social existence in the British colonies as well as the independent country of America. The church and many that practiced or held a religious stance neglected to oppose slavery in any real tangible methods. Slaves proved to be economical, as laws were produced to justify slavery. Large farms that produced, tobacco, sugar, and rice, became labor-intensive cash crops. With the American Revolution and the adoption of the new Constitution, the hope of the institution of slavery's demise vanished with the invention of the cotton gin.¹⁵

¹⁵ Kenneth B. Shover, "Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War (review)." *Civil War history*. 33, no. 3, 269–269.

The international ban on the slave trade in 1808 did little to convince the South that the institution was a sinful practice. Abolitionists grew in the North, yet the greed and hypocrisy of the South produced defensive stances for the institution. The economic benefits of slavery presented an avenue in the South utilized to argue that slavery was a benevolent institution. Deepening their stance, the South insisted that slavery kept slaves occupied, clothed, and fed. The pro-slavery voices of the South held the position that slavery exposed slaves to Christianity. The history of the New World hasn't encompassed appropriate context. Evidence-driven approaches have neglected to examine factors such as punishment by whipping, which was widely accepted. To factor that husbands, wives, and children were frequently separated by the selling of human beings. Neglecting to study the history and philosophy of those under such great oppression requires an interpretation of the systems in place. For instance, in 1857 the United States Supreme Court in their decision in the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* case ruled that all blacks, whether free or enslaved, lacked citizenship rights, and African Americans could not sue in federal court.¹⁶ Yet, historians have worked to foster the belief that Christianity survived and flourished in the slave communities. Within the Missouri Compromise, the Supreme Court took its decision a step further by deeming that Congress had exceeded its authority and that each state, not the Federal Government could govern slavery.¹⁷

With acts of resistance and the continued assistance of Northern abolitionists, the outbreak of the Civil War forever changed the future of America. The debate has often ensued on whether the War was a product of ridng America of slavery or a struggle to preserve the

¹⁶ Judgment in the U.S. Supreme Court Case *Dred Scott v. John F.A. Sanford*, March 6, 1857; Case Files 1792-1995; Record Group 267; Records of the Supreme Court of the United States; National Archives.

¹⁷ Conference committee report on the Missouri Compromise, March 1, 1820; Joint Committee of Conference on the Missouri Bill, 03/01/1820-03/06/1820; Record Group 1281; Records of Joint Committees of Congress, 1789-1989; National Archives.

Union. The reality for slaves was one of credulity and the insistence that Christianity a religion received conversion due to the Great Awakening. This is a notion that supports the influential experts at the expense of the human agencies' experience and emotions. For instance, Michael Gomez argues, "Christian thought," was incorporated into a means of approaching and experiencing the divine that was "totally African."¹⁸

With this historical background the insistence that slaves abandon their African religion in favor of Christianity when it was the faith of their oppressors is not questioned by several historians, but somehow becomes grounds on which they suggest the need for Christianity. For Gomez, "Christianity explained large-scale suffering that could not be found in African religions," Enslavement, the Middle Passage, and slave life in the New World inflicted on Africans was a shock that disrupted their way of life so profoundly that "the religions of the ancestors were unable to satisfactorily explain" them.¹⁹ Others have insisted that slaves were presented with both consolation and explanation in both the story of the Hebrew people and the suffering of Jesus. On the surface, this sounds inviting, but to conclude that these factors resulted in conversion when many slaves couldn't read is problematic at best and a temporal remedy that prescribes more to superstition than faith. For example, Eugene Genovese points this out in his magisterial study, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, where he details how both the story of the Hebrews and the passion of the Christ resonated for slaves with the theme of deliverance through suffering.²⁰

Jon Sensbach's pointed out that, "the Gospel would never have spread among the slaves if it taught them only to bow," in his study of black Moravians in his article "*Simplicity*,

¹⁸ Michael Angelo Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks, the Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, 99.

¹⁹ Ibid., 922-924

²⁰ Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World the Slaves Made*, 33.

*Equality, and Slavery: An Archaeology of Quakerism in the British Virgin Islands.*²¹ This suggests that slaves took something greater from the Bible, perhaps some affirmation of their suffering, perhaps some connection to the pain of the son of God. Maybe even a feeling of being God's chosen people like the Hebrews in the Bible. African slaves in the New World have been suggested to resonate with the redemptive aspects of the Bible by embracing Christianity. But what if the variations of their perceived practice of Christianity were not Christianity at all? The tactlessness of masters in their slaves' religious practices varied enormously across time and space and logical resistance to religion should be considered.

Afro-Christianity and Assumptions 1830-1870

According to Peter Wood:

For more than a century and a half most Afro-Atlantic peoples had clung tenaciously to their ancient beliefs. Excluded from the ranks of human society by virtue of their status as chattel slaves, culturally isolated from society at large and from one another by multiple identities and disparate cultural practices, they had struggled against incredible odds to recreate the domestic and communal lives that were brutally shattered by slavery and to define a new cultural identity that would transcend ethnic and cultural differences. In the forty years preceding the American Revolution the number of Africans claiming Christian identity had slowly increased. Yet, apart from a few small enclaves in Virginia and Georgia and scattered mission stations in the Caribbean, African Christians remained an insignificant minority in all of the British Atlantic plantation societies. Beginning in 1785, however, Christianity made rapid advances, becoming by 1815 a dominant religious influence among Afro-Atlantic peoples. By 1830 a new and highly visible Afro-cultural presence had emerged. It rested on the firm foundation of evangelical Christianity.²²

Not understanding the power of assumption is an aspect that offers the sound of suffering to be able to hide in silence within the history of this country. The desire to use assumptions within the confines of American History requires a closer examination of the truth. In the 1830s the slaves of the antebellum south and the relationship between the peculiar institution of slavery

²¹ Jon. Sensbach, "Simplicity, Equality, and Slavery: An Archaeology of Quakerism in the British Virgin Islands, 1740–1780, 122–123.

²² Peter H. Wood, "Jesus Christ Has Got Thee at Last," 1-7.

and Christianity have been overlooked factors. The history of terror endured by African Americans in the United States and primarily in the Southern region is a subject that many want to forget. In the book, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation*, Daniel Fountain offers a chance of exploring these assumptions with the possibility that slaves and Christianity did not coexist in the manner that we have come to believe. Fountains insist:

Since antebellum church records do not even begin to support the conclusion that a majority of the slaves converted to Christianity, the current emphasis on this segment of the slave population needs examining. In defense of earlier scholarship, several reasons exist as to why historians might generalize about most slaves converting to Christianity during the antebellum period. The foremost reason is that nineteenth-century sources often suggest such a transformation.²³

Broadening the comprehension of the Afro-Christianity methodology, Fountain presents the religion of African Americans as being a combination of diversity despite their restrictions. While there was a minority that constituted the Afro-Christianity of this period, a large stock of religious referents existed. Significant Islamic elements along with folk practices commonly called Hoodoo influenced Afro-Christianity. Fountain declares that “while most nineteenth-century African Americans slaves had some form of religious belief, they were not Christians.”²⁴ Challenging the assumptions regarding the ubiquity of Christianity amongst enslaved Africans and their descendants, he insists that the Christianization of most enslaved Africans did not occur until after emancipation.

Fountain does not disagree with the fact that there was a “strong Christian core within the slave population,” but argues that it equaled to “anything approaching universal acceptance” of Christian belief and practice before the Civil War.²⁵ Fountain suggests that the significantly

²³ Daniel L. Fountain, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870*, 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ Daniel L. Fountain, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870*, 28.

small slave church has eclipsed the study of slave religion and culture, and contends that this church was non-Christian. He surveys the WPA slave narrative for signs of conversion to Christianity before and after the Civil War to demonstrate this. His inquiries into Afro-Christianity and the nature of slaves' religious beliefs leave the assumption that slaves willingly accepted Christianity from masters with open arms as an assumption worth reconsidering. For many slaves, there was Christianity by degree and no belief in it at all. Fountain investigates this mystery by approaching the assumptions of this theory of a heavy conversation of enslaved Africans. Without taking evangelical theology too much at its word, the rejection of Christianity by slaves who felt violated by their masters speaks to several factors that cannot be measured by assumptions, theories, or explanations. The complex picture of the relationship between Christianity and slavery requires abjectly examining the rejection of Christianity by the oppressed.

John Thompson presents several noteworthy interpretations of slaves fully converting to Christianity in 1812. In his book, *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave; Containing His History of 25 Years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape, Written by Himself*, Thompson asserts:

My mistress and her family were all Episcopalians. The nearest church was five miles from out planation, and there was not Methodist church nearer than ten miles. So we went to the Episcopal church, but always came home as we went, for the preaching was above our comprehension, so that we could understand but little that was said.²⁶

Outside of the information provided in his autobiography, little is known about Mr. Thompson. According to his book, he was one of seven children born into slavery on the Wagar plantation in Maryland in 1812. Until October of 1822, he remained on this plantation when he

²⁶ John Thompson, *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave Containing His History of 25 years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape*, 45.

and his family were sold to Mr. George Thomas.²⁷ Although Thomas reveals several revelations within his book that he is a Christian, the limitations that he notes speak to the restrictions that slaves were faced with. Thompson was aware of how fragile salvation was, especially among those in bondage. His oppression coupled with desperation see him also contend:

At length, Mr. Wagar bought at auction a man named Martin, who was a fiddler. As slaves are very fond of dancing, our master thought that fiddling would bring them back to their former ignorant condition and bought this man for that purpose, It had the desired effect upon most of them, and what the whip failed to accomplish, the fiddle completed, for is no easy matter to drive a soul from God by cruelty, when it may easily be drawn away by worldly pleasures; and fiddling I think is better appropriated to this purpose than anything else I could mention.²⁸

This observation provides insight into the struggle that Christianity had to contend with as slavery produced emotions that have been overlooked as well. Those emotions antagonized the assumptions that slaves willfully embraced the Christianity of this land. Along with multiple examples of his slave master's cruelty, Thompson also includes the stories of slaves who escape or offer other forms of resistance that describes the challenges within the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Afro-Christianity assumptions are also used to cheapen the oppression that slaves and their descendants endured. Both stand as methods in pro-slavery Christians and defenders of slavery utilized to counter the argument that slavery reduced Africans to an infantile state of existence while also stripping them of their culture, heritage, and overall ability to freely choose a religion of their choice. Another argument that history has reviewed, comes in the form of focusing only on the heroic achievements of slaves, the emphasis on their selecting Christianity has been downplayed. Real institutional obstacles and boundaries were constructed to restrict, shape, and mood the direction that slaves traveled religiously.

²⁷ John Thompson, *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave Containing His History of 25 years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape*, 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

The institution of slavery shaped the slave's Christian experience with restricted access to religious instruction. But many of the assumptions tend to overlook this fact. Another restriction to slaves' conversion, comes from the reality that the nature of Christian messages was typically shaped by a pro-slavery Christian method of preaching obedience. The religion that slaves identified with has its system of core values that operated with an approach that help them survive slavery. Thompson profoundly states, "I dared no trust an unseen God"²⁹ as he is hired out to a man name Richard Thomas. This slaver attempts to sell Thompson with the discovery of Thomas's ability to read and write which he had learned to do secretly. He also speaks of an overseer who uses trickery and "whipped him until his entrails could be seen moving within his body, "injuries that left him unable to "walk, or sit, or lie down" for five weeks.³⁰

The study of African religious systems has also been dictated by social and cultural anthropologists, this false impression has produced a belief that slaves' relationship with Christianity was stagnant and has been viewed as a timeless' character of enslaved Africans' perspective towards religion. These debatable features have been applied to slaves and their religious practices that claim that Christianity dominated the slaves' worldview. Daniel Fountain argues this point with this observation:

Another explanation for generalizations about Afro-Christianity is that slave and integrated worship services were probably, next to work, the most visible public behavior exhibited by members of the slave population. Therefore, Christian worship services were some of the most documented accounts of individual and collective slave behavior of the antebellum period. Furthermore, given the dramatic differences between many slaves' and their observers' worship styles, these occasions most likely represent the most memorable public slave behavior for those recording their experiences in the Old South. In addition, many antebellum slave narratives were a means to further the abolitionist

²⁹ John Thompson, *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave Containing His History of 25 years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape*, 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

cause. Authors and publishers sought to conjure feelings of sympathy as well as empathy for the slaves in the hearts and minds of their readers.³¹

Why would slaves adopt the religion of their oppressors, and in what way can we measure whether slaves embraced Christianity or rejected the religion? This is both a simple and complex concern that examines how some used Christianity to profoundly change their theologies while others couldn't find joy in a religion that they say is hypocritical. Either way, both options see that if all slaves ran towards and not away from Christianity, then we have limited these men and women in life and death. The questions of hypocrisy, authenticity, intention, and agency make the insistence of assuming that Christianity reduces the importance of time and place. Focusing on slavery as only an issue of human rights undermines the examination of the diversity of the individuals who withstood slavery's grip. Those who contend that Christianity provided slaves access to the sacred existence don't see the beauty in the freedom of choice that slaves were not given.

B. Eugene McCarthy and Thomas L. Doughton wrote on several historical limitations to African Americans in the 1800s. One of their observation's states:

Because many slaves arrived in the area unable to speak English, regional or town historians might represent these Africans as comical, quaint, or colorful characters, and their language limitations were subsumed into local oral historical traditions.³²

Another assumption that has been used by pro-slavery Christians has been the insistence that slaves and their spiritual strength weren't limited by the boundaries of slaveholders. They speak of patriotism that sees Christianity as a defense against the bondage of slavery. They promoted a country that held laws that seemed from a Christian perspective of the law. However,

³¹ Daniel L. Fountain, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870*, 8.

³² B. Eugene McCarthy and Thomas L. Doughton, *From Bondage to Belonging: The Worcester Slave Narratives*, xix.

one of the laws that made it difficult for slaves to fully convert to Christianity was the Fugitive Slave Law. The Fugitive Slave Law limited slaves' ability to partake in meaningful Christian functions outside of their plantation. Samuel May speaks of the grip in which such restrictions constructed by pro-slavery Christians kept slaves from fully partaking in the liberty of Christianity, stating:

Reader, is your patriotism of the kind which believes, with the supporters of old monarchies, that the Sovereign Power can do no wrong? Consider the long record which has been laid before you, and say if your country has not enacted a most wicked, cruel, and shameful law, which merits only the condemnation and abhorrence of every heart. Consider that this law was aimed at the life, liberty, and happiness of the poor and least-privileged portion of our people – a class whom the laws should befriend, protect, and raise. What is the true character of a law, whose working, whose fruits are such as this meagre outline of its history shows? Is it fit that such deeds and such a law should have your sanction and support? Will you remain in a moment's doubt whether to be a friend or a foe to such a law? Will you countenance or support the man, in the church or in the state, who is not its open and out-spoken opponent? Will you not, rather, yourself trample it under foot, as alike the disgrace of your country, the enemy of humanity, and the enemy of God? And nobly join, with heart and hand, every honest man who seeks to load with the opprobrium they deserve, the law itself and everything that justifies and upholds it?³³

Within this observation of an obvious limitation to the slave's ability to attain freedom, how can it be assumed that they attained religious freedom? Well, it has been assumed that the notion of religious change as the product of a dynamic and reciprocal process provided an attractive new model for Africanists. Because missionary work in Africa predated the Protestant Reformation, Christianization was almost entirely dominated by Catholic rather than Protestant missionaries.³⁴ Within the margins of their book, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*, Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood state:

³³ Samuel May, *The fugitive slave law, and its victims*. New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 47-48.

³⁴ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*, 27-34.

our understanding of African religious beliefs and practices consists, for the most part, of representations of African religious as European missionaries saw them. Religiously arrogant, some missionaries denied that Africans had any religion at all; others recognized African religiosity but assumed the superiority of the Christian God to African divinities and struggled relentlessly to convince African peoples of that “truth.”³⁵

The authors successfully move the frame of thinking within the relationship in Afro-Christianity theory to incorporate the influences of enslaved women in the development of Baptist and Methodist Christianity in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Insisting that free and enslaved African Americans were crucial in the spread and development of evangelical Christianity in the antebellum period, their belief that biracial partnerships were significant factors that took on deeper meanings for Christianity among slaves and slaveholders presents a problematic truth to the assumption of Christian thought within the slave community. This is both disheartening and fascinating, as their assessment of these relationships provides evidence that southern white evangelicals began accommodating the economic, social, and racial demands of powerful slave-owning planters. In the 1820s and 1830s, these entities close the door to racial equality, yet somehow and some way, the door to conversion for the enslaved remained open.

The historical work of uncovering how pro-slavery Christians maintained inequality reveals their lack of inevitability, which casts doubt on the current belief that racial politics and division among slaves and their masters were defeated with the conversion to Christianity. The direct nature of the authors’ delivery mirrors prior explorations into the religions of Africa, despite the barriers that slaves encounter, there is an assumption that Christianity was their chosen coping medication of choice. Despite the allusion to the tradition that evangelicalism thought was not forced upon enslaved Africans while overlooking the fact that insisting or assuming that the magic of religion won the day, we would better allow the unknown of the

³⁵ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*, 2.

enslaved experience to speak to the reality of their plight rather than assuming. Harriet Gresham was born a slave in 1838 in South Carolina, is stated:

A Negro preacher delivered sermons on the plantation. Services being held in the church used by whites after their services on Sunday. The preacher must always act as a peacemaker and mouthpiece for the master, so they were told to be subservient to their masters in order to enter the Kingdom of God. But the slaves held secret meetings and had praying grounds where they met a few at a time to pray for better things.³⁶

Willfully or Mandatory

To conclude that enslaved Africans planted roots in Christianity that their descendants gravitated to makes for elusive examinations of the story of slavery. One of the biggest obstacles to slaves fully converting to Christianity came in the restrictions of slaves being able to read the Bible for themselves. The forbidden fruit of slaves constructing their interpretation of the Bible was not only a custom to prevent them from reading, but the restrictive laws held slaves in a state of ignorance. In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul enters a spiritual discourse of unseen proportions. In the tenth chapter of this discourse, he declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”³⁷ This scripture interpretation sits as the foundation of proslavery Christian’s argument that slaves embraced the religion that slaveholders use to keep they’re in a state of obedience. To fully understand how the conclusion that insists that slaves receive their faith-based off than simply hearing Afro-Christianity has attracted enthusiastic attention for generations from historians, scholars, and laypersons who seek to investigate different elements of this dynamic aspect of history.

As a civilizing institution, the fascination with Afro-Christianity provided pro-slavery Christians with validation into their belief that slavery was divinely sanctioned, however, can the

³⁶ Harriet Gresham, born a slave in 1838 in South Carolina, as reported by her Interviewer, ca. 1935.

³⁷ Romans 10:17, *King James Version*.

conversion to Christianity be fully viewed as a willful practice or as a mandatory extension of their nightmare as slaves? The degrading influence of human bondage provided anti-slavery Christians with evidence of the exposed and offensive treatment of enslaved Africans. Travelers from outside of the South shared a fascination with Afro-Christianity that proposed a few conclusions. In one regard, the Afro-Christianity of slaves demonstrated the vitality of enslaved Africans and their descendants despite the racist, conformist pressures of American society while also leading to assumptions of the acceptance of Christianity within the population of slaves, on the other hand, the creativity of those in bondage provides insight into the stagnating influences of physical deprivation and forced labor.

Even when considering the formation of the institution of religion while properly addressing the absence of freedom. The analysis of African Americans and their relationship to God and the theological explanation of their mass conversion should not be assumed, suggested, or even insisted upon. A deeper look at how the world that African Americans encountered was made concerning God requires the perspective of slaves. Africa provides complexity to the story of African American religion; the variety and the creative fusion of the continent provided a mixture of different beliefs entering the New World. A wide range of local religious beliefs and practices traveled across the Atlantic during the middle passage. The many cultures and linguistic groups within the slave ships represented the diversity that has been overlooked and underappreciated. Within the region that most slaves came from, West Africa, religious traditions varied greatly, and the powerful presence of Islam must be taken into consideration.

Preserving their traditions and their chosen religion was a difficult task as Africans arrived in the New World. With the introduction of high death rates, rape, starvation, and other physical exploitations, the harsh circumstances of slavery eradicated the tribal ethnicities that

Africans were custom to. The word heathen took on new life as slaveholders viewed the term as their justification and right to force-feed Christianity, which made the preservation of religious traditions all most impossible. Nonetheless, the ability to construct isolated songs, rhythms, movements, and beliefs in the curative power of faith permitted elements of Africa to survive. The roots and the efficacy of Africa in which Africans spoke to spirits, danced to drums, and provided context with oral stories manifested themselves in North America. Combining these elements with Christianity should not be viewed as conversion, these practices provide evidence of something quite different. Europeans and Americans introduced African slaves to a religion that was coupled with oppression, yet these men and women remained looking to the past for inspiration, they keep their eyes on Africa, where freedom was the biggest part of their religious understanding. Important areas of agreement and disagreement emerge from viewing the historical literature written.

The history of Afro-Atlantic culture and religion should not be disassociated from the history of Africa, but rather, provided the investigated consideration required to fully answer theories and inquiries into the remembered past. In the antebellum United States, Protestantism was a core feature of proslavery ideology and Southern planters claimed that their plantations were modeled on the slave-owning households of the Old Testament. But even in the seventeenth century, evangelization was touted as a central justification for slavery. Both Protestants and Catholics argued that enslavement benefited Africans because it saved them from their “heathen” past.³⁸ Migrants enslaved from Africa arrived not just as individuals to the Atlantic World, but they arrived as communities within this era of mass exile carrying rituals, beliefs, and symbols that outdated their introduction to Christianity. African customs and

³⁸ Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World*, 13-14.

languages presented features of their lives that religion can't simply explain away, in fact, how is it that their beliefs couldn't change or adapt to their new knowledge and new circumstances? For instance, slaves grew determined to gain education and comprehension of what they were experiencing. John W. Fields was a former slave who declared:

In most of us colored folks was the great desire to [be] able to read and write. We took advantage of every opportunity to educate ourselves. The greater part of the plantation owners were very harsh if we were caught trying to learn or write. It was the law that if a white man was caught trying to educate a negro slave, he was liable to prosecution entailing a fine of fifty dollars and a jail sentence. We were never allowed to go to town and it was not until after I ran away that I knew that they sold anything bit slaves, tobacco, and whiskey. Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South has on us. We knew we could run away, but what then? An offender guilty of this crime was subjected to very harsh punishment.³⁹

William Moore spoke of his experience as a slave as well, as he noted:

Some Sundays we went to church some place. We allus liked to go any place. A white preacher allus told us to 'bey our masters and work hard and sing and when we die we go to Heaven. Marse Tom didn't mind is singin' in our cabins at night, but we better not let him cotch us prayin'.

Seems like niggers jus' got to pray. Half they life am in prayin'. Some nigger take turn 'bout to watch and see if Marse Tom anyways 'bout, then they circle theyselves on the floor in the cabin and pray. They git to moanin' low and gentle, 'Some day, some day, this yoke gwine be lifted often our shoulders.'⁴⁰

Yet, in 1848, Wilson Armistead declared:

Providence has widely instituted, in every age and in every country, a counteracting energy to diminish the crimes and miseries of mankind, which the influence of Christianity have increased, by unfolding to it the widest possible domain.⁴¹

These differing perspectives provide complications with the assumptions of Christian allegiance and conversion to the faith as sharper differences emerged. Most point to the religious

³⁹ *Federal Writer's Project Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 5, Indiana, Arnold-Woodson. 1936.*

⁴⁰ *Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 16, Texas, Part 3, Lewis-Ryles. 1936.*
Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn163/>.

⁴¹ Wilson Armistead, *A tribute for the Negro: being a vindication of the moral, intellectual, and religious capabilities of the coloured portion of mankind: with particular reference to the African race*, 6.

revivalism in the southern states as a period in which African Americans turn to Christianity. The tradition of assuming that slaves were restored to Christianity coincided with this period as well. The belief is that an increase in Methodist and Baptist conversions comes from religious practices that were constructed with an expectation of good that was absent within the slave and slaveholder relationship. Understanding slave conversions as processes where Christianity was reinterpreted and transformed raises questions regarding the Christians who owned slaves or supported slavery. For example, Charles F. Irons and his book that he provides several insights into such theories, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antihelium Virginia*. Within his study, the vast amount of his work is centered around the antebellum proslavery Christianity in Virginia. Nevertheless, Irons examines a significant occurrence that speaks to the assumption of Christian conversion, he argues that Virginian slaves constantly and continually “forced whites to confront the religious and social paradoxes of “inhuman bondage as he states, “But slaves did not need to win cases against their owners to win moral victories or to challenge the dehumanization of their enslavement.”⁴²

Irons doesn't fully account for the presents of trained black missionaries who became a principal contributor to slaves hearing the good news of Jesus Christ. From the colonial period up to 1831, revolts by slaves introduced a complex problem of analysis that insist that slaves fully embraced Christianity. Some of these men who interpreted the Bible provided material to condemn the institution of slavery. These men looked at Christianity as a co-contributor to their pain, as they spoke of the Bible with an eye on the double standard that slaveholders utilized. Irons doesn't receive the formation of Nat Turner's interpretation of the Bible as slaves resisting Christianity. Rather, he as has others who studied the actions of Mr. Turner concluded that his

⁴² Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity White and Black Evanelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia*, 84.

actions were a result of revenge. But how can overlook the fact that this trained Black preacher interpreted God's word as his justification for his actions? Within the insurrections to slavery, those who felt compelled to stand to slavery spoke of the Christianity of America with contempt that one can conclude as resisting the terms of Christianity.

Therefore, to fully answer if slaves fully converted to Christianity, we must insist on asking, in what way did slaves who converted to Christianity play a role in their oppression, and was this agreement done unintentionally which in turn validated the paternalism intrinsic persistence to proslavery Christianity or did individuals such as Nat Turner provide reasons for their revolts by both slaves and slaveholders. Or can we review these actions as proof that all slaves did not convert to Christianity, that this is verification that they in more ways than not adopted Christianity? Within his confession, Turner speaks of his vision:

And about this time I had a vision—and I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened—the thunder rolled in the Heavens, and blood flowed in streams—and I heard a voice saying. “Such is your luck, such you are called to see, and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bare it.”⁴³

Christianity at its core is a highly individual belief system built on the premise of a personal relationship with God, the resistance to slavery may have been a byproduct of his trauma or an alternative to the proslavery Christian version of Christianity. Either way, the results of religion can make for a compelling story or can lead to a vision that ends with death and confessions. What is clear is that many individuals resisted or refused to make personal commitments to living in bondage as Christians. Meeting spirits was common ground for slaves as well as having visions, the historian Lawrence W. Levine contends:

The Africans brought to the English colonies as slaves in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries did not carry with them a network of beliefs, customs, institutions. And practices constituting what might be called with accuracy a unified “African”

⁴³ Nat Turner and Thomas R. Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, Virginia*,

culture. No such monolithic cultural entity existed. The peoples of Africa created a myriad of languages, religious, customs, social, political, and economic institutions which differentiated them and gave them separate identities. These marked differences have been cited frequently to illustrate the insuperable obstacles slaves in the British colonies of North America faced in keeping a semblance of their traditional cultures alive.⁴⁴

Thus, the resistance located within the visions of Nat Turner cannot be fully credited to his Christian upbringing, nor can his insistence that he killed in the name of Jesus be attributed to his religious zeal. The traditions of seeing visions and talking to spirits are not restricted to Christian thought and traditions, due to the reality that these traits are shared within several different religions it is the act of resisting Christianity by slaves can be bested viewed as a stance of defiance to the proslavery model of Christianity in the British Colonies and the Independent domain of the United States. Within Christian dominations such as Methodist, Baptist, Protestant, and others the overlying perspective that actively promoted the idea that all Christians were equal in the sight of God produced conflicts with the acceptance of other principles. Slavery provided the slave with an example of the continued mockery of the true message of equality and liberation that resided within the margins of the Bible. Yet, with a large population of uneducated members within the community of slaves, the obstacles that keep them in bondage also keep them from fully partaking in a Christianity that was not separate from their persecution. The *Alabama Baptist Advocate* declared in an article in 1850 “Destitution of Religious Knowledge”:

That there is a great destitution of religious knowledge—“a famine of the word of the Lord”—in many portions of our country, South and West cannot be denied. Our ministry are too few to supply the wants of our extended and increasing territory. Comparatively few of our churches are supplied with more than monthly preaching, while vast numbers of them have not even that—to say nothing of the wide fields wherein as yet no churches have been planted. In this state of things, it can be imagined that a most lamentable want of instruction . . . prevails in many parts of the country.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness; Abrahams, Singing the Master*

⁴⁵ “Destitution of Religious Knowledge,” *Alabama Baptist Advocate*, March 20, 1850, 2.

The Warmed of Other Gods

W.E.B. Du Bois summed up the feeling of not fully comprehending the depths of oneself as an African American with these words:

One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled striving; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.⁴⁶

Hence, the assumption that enslave Africans produced children and grandchildren that knew enough of themselves within slavery to fully accept Christianity doesn't demand an explanation of the psyche of those in bondage. Another obstacle that history overlooks within the measurement of the conversion of slaves to Christianity is the fact that restrictions such as distinct must be accounted for. The lack of communication in certain locations of the South presented challenges to Christianity in reaching slaves in remote areas. This religious divide within the institution of slavery didn't lead all slaves to find hope in the Bible. In many cases, the Bible and its words never touch the ears, hearts, or minds of slaves that suffered the strictest miseries of slavery. By design, there were plantations that restricted visitations, forbid any encouragement to slaves, and were located miles from others. Within this planation the culture of slaveholders as their supreme being operated with a level of fear and desperation that contradicts the scenes that repeated themselves within the autobiographical accounts of slaves. Within the

⁴⁶ W.E.D. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, 2.

confines of this planation, many of these slaves were unsure of who, what, and where they fit in, consequently, some slaves had chosen to partake in other religious practices.

Since the first settlers arrived in North America the religion of Islam has been a piece of the American religious fabric. While we do not know exactly how many African Muslims arrived on the shores of slavery within the British colonies, we can connect the dots within legal documents, cultural traditions, and slaveholders' paperwork. Others have pointed out that Islam is a much-neglected aspect of the early African American religious experience, according to Michael A Gomez.⁴⁷ Reminding historians that nonreligious belief systems are also worthy of study, John C. Willis declares in *"From the Dictates of Pride to the Paths of Righteousness: Slave Honor and Christianity in Antebellum Virginia,"* that, "honor often surpassed Christianity as a slave belief system."⁴⁸ Such criticism is summed up by Peter Kolchin in the book, *American Slavery, 1691-1877*. He writes that "historians have recently been so impressed by the force of slave religion that they may well have exaggerated its universality and slighted some of its contradictory implications."⁴⁹ If we know where to look, history has taught us that nothing is simply black and white. Thus, even when reviewing Central Africans who arrived as slaves in the New World were not full-fledged Christians: they did not simply bring with them some random "survivals" of traditional religion.⁵⁰

Kambiz GhaneaBassiri produced a detailed study in his book, *A History of Islam in America*, where he states:

Reading the early history of Islam in America exclusively through biographies can lead to misunderstandings. The first of these is quantitative. These individuals represent only a

⁴⁷ Michael Angelo Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks, the Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, 71.

⁴⁸ John C Willis, *"From the Dictates of Pride to the Paths of Righteousness: Slave Honor and Christianity in Antebellum Virginia."* 37-55.

⁴⁹ Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877*, 51.

⁵⁰ Sweet, James H.. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*.

tiny fraction of the Muslims in antebellum America. Although there is no conclusive way of assessing the number of Muslims who were transported as slaves to the territories that became the United States, based on the size of the Muslim population in the region from which slaves were taken to America, scholars estimate that “tens of thousands” of African Muslims lived in colonial and antebellum America. Surviving biographical data detail the lives of very few Muslims who, as a result of a combination of serendipity and their own extraordinary backgrounds, were sufficiently prominent to be memorialized in white America. When centered on the biographies of extraordinary individuals, the history of Islam in colonial and antebellum America is reduced to little more than quaint stories of a “fortunate slave” or a “prince among slaves.” An examination of historical evidence from regions in Africa from which slaves were purchased could be combined with American sources that identify slaves by either African names or Muslim nationalities. Such sources as runaway slave advertisements or slave ledgers help flesh out larger contexts of the early Muslims in America. Gomez’s scholarship, in particular, adds the African dimension of this larger historical context. What he finds is that African Muslims during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were increasingly involved in the Atlantic slave trade. One reason for their growing numbers was mainly the jihads of this period. These West African jihads were led by Muslim reformers who dramatically increased the presence of Islam in West Africa and sought to purify West African Islam from native practices, which these reformers deemed superstitious and heretical.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the distinction within the assumptions that slaves universally surrendered to Christianity in hopes of attaining salvation has transformed the way that Christianity and slavery are remembered. Historian Daniel Boorstin contends “But ... organized white churches did not encompass the religious life of the Southern Negro. The Negro developed a religious life of his own. Much of this life remained unrecorded because many of the independent Negro religious meetings were illegal, and most of their participants, including sometimes even the preacher, were not uncommon, and they became the nucleus, and later the whole organized form, of Negro communities. The Negroes’ religious life thrived in institutions that were often invisible to the white masters, and that is barely visible to a historian today.”⁵²

⁵¹ Kambiz Ghanee-Bassiri, *A History of Islam in America from the New World to the New World Order*, 16-17.

⁵² Daniel J Boorstin. *The Americans: The National Experience*, 196-97.

His insight places the proper emphasis on the restrictions under which slaves or African Americans were forced to operate under and how this burden still impacts their ancestors today. Thus, the obstacles associated with researching the relationship between Christianity and slavery have become an invisible variable within history. The impact of this relationship on our modern perception of religion and the legacy of slavery, also speaks to the resistance of society to acknowledge the unmeasurable impact in which both institutions have invested into our dispositions towards different races. Most who have had the opportunity to properly detail the connection and influence of Christianity on slavery have stood on the fence. This fence provides proslavery perceptions versus antislavery perceptions to reside next to each other. Those who reside within the proslavery residence insist that Africa and those taken into slavery have no history, and often allude to there being no primary sources to capture their feelings towards religion and slavery.

However, Dr. Albert J. Raboteau contended “We should speak of the “invisibility” of slave religion with irony: it is the neglect of slave sources by historians which has been the main cause of this invisibility. Studies by John Blassingame, Sterling Stuckey, Lawrence Levine, Eugene Genovese, and others have demonstrated the fallacy of assuming that slaves left no articulate record of their experience. Blassingame’s *The Slave Community* and *Slave Testimony*, Genovese’s *Roll, Jordan Roll*, and Levine’s *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* eloquently prove that there are indeed valid sources deriving from the slaves themselves.”⁵³ This assertion captures the heart of the research while also providing support for my research questions. Within the confines of the relationship between Christianity and slavery, many assumptions exist that work in a manner that permits perception to influence the truth. The ease with which the history

⁵³ Albert J. Raboteau. *Slave Religion: The ‘Invisible Institution’ In the Antebellum South*, x.

of this relationship has been abridged has permitted the rich history of African Americans to be reduced to fables, myths, and superstitions. In their study, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*, historians Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood state:

The migration of cultures thus forms an important and continuing link between increasingly different regions of the plantation world. The American Revolution and political independence ushered in a series of changes that dramatically transformed the religious landscape of mainland North America. The demand for religious freedom that paralleled the movement for political freedom was especially strong in the South, where evangelical sects flourished. Beginning with Virginia, old denominations like the Anglicans were disestablished and new denominations like the Baptist and Methodists established themselves. Old and new congregations split over ostensibly inconsequential matters of religious practice and ritual, and entirely new sects arose out of the religious disorder. What issued from the chaos was a keen competition for souls between the bewildering array of denominations and sects. As English and American evangelists surveyed the moral landscape, they discovered African Americans, and African Americans discovered them. It was an enduring attraction. With their deeply rooted spirituality derived from Africa and their profound religious need for a sense of meaning in life, African Americans became a great prize in the evangelical contest for church membership and gathered souls.⁵⁴

Within these observations, several factors can be taken away and reapplied to examine how different motives within the period of slavery compelled different entities to partake in the business of conversion. Chief among them was the desire to put bodies in the seats of Churches to showcase growth in Churches. The fight to produce numbers that operated as prosperity within Church communities often works to produce an exalted level of success. Those scholars who believe that Christianity proved to be compatible with the bondage that slavery provided, underestimate how Christianity was coerced, feigned, and manufactured as a tool within slave communities. Christianity provided slaves psychologically and spiritually with great provisions, however, the physical disadvantages of slavery left potential believers to seek other religions,

⁵⁴ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*, 118-119.

deny religion altogether, or deny themselves any comfort in anything associated with their masters' perspectives. Across both time and space, the inability to attain their freedom resulted in their endurance to provide better days for future generations.

The forced migration across the Atlantic introduced a wide variety of religious beliefs into the American landscape, however, as Africans were largely reduced to slaves their religious beliefs were also reduced. Africans and African Americans pursued their ancestral religious beliefs within the American landscape as slaveholders opposed African religious practices. Therefore, when the mid-nineteenth century produced efforts to convert slaves to Christianity, enslaved Africans and African Americans stood firm with a desire to pursue their ancestral religions.⁵⁵ Consequently, it is not unreasonable to argue that many if not most believers of African religions continued to practice their faiths to the best of their restricted ability. These religions would have been different due to the nature of slavery, however, the practices of communication with the natural and supernatural deities, an active linkage with the dead and the living as well as polytheism, and ancestor veneration.

Serving to organize the slaves' worldview, different variations of their faith, particularly the spiritually informed practice of conjuring can be argued as more influential than Christianity. Yet, when pushed to explain the introduction of the diversity of African people's religious practices, the credit goes to the peculiar institution of slavery, to the plantations of the South, and the farms in the North. Credit goes to the culture of slaves in slavery, in which they invented ways to express themselves, or they overcame their oppression with songs, secret prayer meetings, and exhaustive measures to remain sane. These men and women were unable to speak one another's language as they often came from different tribes, kingdoms, or cultures. They

⁵⁵ Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 43–92

were placed in an environment that was unfamiliar, harsh, and isolated. Thus, instead of highlighting the persistence of slaves, the insistence on assumptions regarding their conversion remains the focus in many cases, while their keenness to survive slavery seems to fall apart.⁵⁶

African heritage dissipated with the arrival of new generations born into slavery, this fact produced a heritage that became incomprehensible to the children of slaves, which also produced generations of slaves who did not know Africa. However, the will and drive to capture elements of their ancestral past has always been a feature within the religious practices of African Americans. Another staple within the formation of slavery comes with slaveholders' ability to restrict public displays of the slaves' ancestral customs and beliefs with a system of laws, restrictions, and methods that treated African cultures as uncivilized. These actions reinforced a perspective that bred cruelty to prevent so-called insurrections. This accelerated the process of thinning African Americans' relationship with their homeland, which benefitted slaveholders. Therefore, even when researching the elements of slaves' African heritage that managed to survive slavery still sees its remembrance challenged by the above-mentioned Christian thought and assumptions. The forced practice of insisting that slaves use English forced them to lose their native languages, this action is viewed as a positive somehow and viewed as an interpretation of Afro-Christianity endurance.⁵⁷

The fallacy of historical anachronism has pursued assumptions that have been aimed at depictions of enslaved Africans and African Americans with an idealized version of their conversion. For many Africans, "approaching and experiencing the divine" meant dealing with

⁵⁶ Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 209–17

⁵⁷ Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*, 3–75.

real world problems; religion restored “temporal balance through spiritual intervention.”⁵⁸ The relationship between Christianity and slavery is a tale of deliberate, systemic neglect that has become a vicious loop of disregard for the totality of the ills of slavery.

Slaveholders often provided insult to injury, when taking into consideration, the distribution of rations with the actual energy expended to complete slave tasks. As increased workloads did not equal increased food. Within this peculiar institution, an initial tool that slaves utilized was organizing slowdowns in production. Additionally, they would also fake illness, break require tools for work, and so on. This would lead to negotiations between slaves and their slaveholders, and daily routines were established in some cases for the benefit of both parties. Another common form of resistance became theft, slaves would take fruits, vegetables, livestock, tobacco, liquor, and even money from slaveholders. This form of resistance would also result in runaways in fear of extreme retribution. Hungry slaves risked consequences as hunger often prevailed. As a peculiar institution, nearly all the uprisings ended in death, yet the desire and fight for freedom continued. The unforgiving cruelty experienced by those who were sentenced to a life of forced servitude offered a stark testament to the despair in the institution impacted.⁵⁹

Slavery was ultimately about coerced labor; therefore, the most common forms of resistance were those that took place in the work environment. The way cooperation was reached involved such harsh treatment that would easily exceed our imaginations. Slaves struggled daily to define the terms of their work as customary rights emerged in most fields of production within slavery. Those who produced the most understood the value of their

⁵⁸ John Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 132.

⁵⁹ Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* Charleston SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform], 2018.

production by the treatment that they received from their masters. Those that receive beatings and other forms of punishment suffered and their severe handling led to several options. Some endured and increase their production, and some continue to produce at the same rate and receive the same results. Some ran away, while some resisted and conducted revolts or other methods of rebellion. When you consider that the most minor transgressions were greeted with grave retribution. As reading for slaves was viewed as an act of rebellion, thus, any and every form of self-improvement was regulated to sustain complete control of slaveholders' property. There are so many untold stories of slaves who engaged in acts of resistance. The organized, armed insurrections were of a rarity as opposing this peculiar institution took the combination of generations and assistance. Imposed crudity and sanctioned hatred by those in power, the system of slavery was so ubiquitous that every facet of daily life for those under the foot of oppression was a day that offered death before the attainment of freedom.

Lionel H. Kennedy and Thomas Parker, provide colonial and early national newspapers which contain actual accounts of slave insurrections. In their book, *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South Carolina, Charleston, SC*. Details of the plans for the unsuccessful 1822 slave rebellion led by Denmark Vesey are provided. Vesey was a free black man living in Charleston, South Carolina who had around thirty-five African American supporters. Unfortunately, slave informers foiled their efforts, and Vesey along with the thirty-five followers was captured and put to death by hanging. "Enough has been disclosed to satisfy every reasonable mind, that considerable numbers were involved," the report states. Vesey allegedly told his rebel group during a meeting that they would seize the guard house to get arms, then they would be able to "rise and fight against the whites for our liberties." This revolt contained perhaps the highest percentage of

blacks on the North American continent and ranks high among large-scale revolts, even though the slaves were caught before the actual revolt materialized. Reading from the Bible, Vesey echoed the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage as their battle cry, as the characteristics of this particular rebellion impacted perceptions of slaves and their willingness to resist within the history of American slavery. The narrative that has dominated popular opinion is sharply disputed with the actions of Vesey and his supporters.⁶⁰

The fear of slave revolts began to enter written documentation, in his letter, John Rutherford, an agent for Virginia plantation owner William B. Randolph, details Randolph's fear of slave revolts. Addressing a concerned neighbor near Randolph's Chatworth plantation, the fear of "fatal consequences" because of the "brutality" in which the overseer of the Chatworth slaves employed was of much concern. This peculiar institution naturally fought against any real solutions to resolve these cruel practices as the overseer detailed, that he whipped some of the slaves due to them being idle. He also stated that some had escaped and not returned, but also affirmed that the situation was under control. Informing his supervisor that work was proceeding. The degree of casual disregard for the oppression inflicted on an entire race, as these fears of oppressors is an open display of these individuals' ideology that they were superior to who they enslaved. Nevertheless, history has revealed that in understanding slavery the behavior of the overseer and the owner of the plantation behavior cannot be justified in any way. The natural tendency to resist a fundamentally unnatural system with the common denominator being

⁶⁰ Lionel H Kennedy, and Thomas Parker, *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South Carolina*. Charleston, SC: James R. Schenck, 1822. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi->

resistance is not just logical but the magnitude in which undocumented attempts of freedom have to be taken into account with the proper interpretation of slaves' fear of intense retribution.⁶¹

There are several difficulties that slavery presented to Christianity, nonetheless, it is not clear of how much damaged has been done, or the complete impact of pro-slavery Christians actions and writings that have had on the conflicting issues of objectively remembering history. Their works operated on assumptions with huge gaps between them—something that defenders of slavery believed benefited their cause. The habitual utilization of the Bible, the ability to use perceptions, and the insistence of permitting assumptions to consume memories, help to establish a hierarchy. Yet, there has been an about-face in terms of the dynamic of assumptions which allow conventional notions of slavery when coupled with Christianity as the fallacy of consensus for the truth of historical claims. Thus, an appeal to popular consensus for the truth of some historical claim when evidence and expert testimony is needed as it cannot be by rational and dispassionate assessments of all the available relevant evidence. Concerns with reviewing the actions, thoughts, and behaviors of pro-slavery Christians have produced a house-of-cards of assumptions that do not have more than one paramour. One cannot simply assume that, as it was not uncommon, though perhaps customary, for enslaved Africans to worship Christianity as a way of hiding in plain sight.

Scholar's fishing for alternatives to slaves turning to other religions and rejecting Christianity all together have in many cases ran into obstacles. Because there are good reasons to believe that slaves equally converted to Christianity while also equally rejecting Christianity, the cost of the reputation of Christianity should not come at the expense of evidence, historical

⁶¹ John Floyd, governor of Virginia, to James Hamilton, governor of South Carolina November 19, 1831. Holograph letter. Manuscript Division. (1-7) African American Odyssey.

accuracy, and historical integrity. Studies of Christianity and slavery often target the internal economy embody of both the rewards and the perils of discovering and using the relationship at its most basic level. The study of slavery in the America coupled with the historiography of Christianity within the period of American slavery evolved and transformed how the memory of the two institutions coexisted. The importance of context provides clarity into the balancing act in which slaves were forced to encounter.

The assumptions within the relationship between slavery and Christianity revealed more powerfully or fundamentally the profound differences with free society than religion. The assumptions within the religious debate between slaveholders and the advocates of freeing slaves debated whether God sanctioned slavery. The divide grew wider and deeper as both the pro-slavery Christians and the anti-slavery Christians elaborated their biblical and Christian arguments. The disposition of slaveholders and defenders of slavery held assumptions that convinced them not only that slavery was divinely ordained as those who opposed slavery spoke against such assumptions. Pro-slavery Christians produced a defense sought put to defend their right to own humans as property, which became, a defense of Christianity as well as a defense of their unique civilization that Christianity made possible.

Nevertheless, slaveholders comprehended slavery as the only basis on which Christianity could persist in a progressively argumentative world that required a prominent role of assumptions to hold slaves and their opponents of slavery at bay. Within the totality of the relationship between Christianity and slavery the defense of slavery became more of a means to maintain superiority over slaves as slaveholders understood Christianity with assumptions that slaves were incapable of living as civilized human beings without the assistance of white supervision.

Conclusion

Traditional history regards the conversion of slaves to Christianity as a foregone conclusion. In this vein, many have fallen victim to such thinking, sadly this argument lacks proper examination. The desire to conclude that slaves ran to Christianity, while not having any rights as human beings under the law is not reasonable. Permitting such accounts to reside comfortably in the place of truth works to distance America from its original sin. The hope of deliverance of slavery has been attached to faith while overlooking the facts. Slaves were forced to partake in Christian practices, therefore, concluding that these men and women freely choose Christianity is like saying that they choose to be in forced servitude. While Christianity may have been a significant part of life for slaves in some parts of the antebellum South and within different confines of the North. Painting such a broad picture reveals the typical trends that exist today.

Whether they are the visible divisions within our country and the systems in place that have associated guilt with color and wealth with race. The acceptance of the content of one's skin, and countless assumptions related directly to skin color have dominated how we interact with one another. The exaggerated push to simply perceive slaves as spirit-filled, forgiving, and submissive is the product of the ill-treatment of a nation. Their shared experiences of oppression do not equal the same shared experiences of faith. Thus, there is a need to develop a movement toward true historical remembrance on this subject. If we would remember that the laws of the land deemed that slaves were not human. If we would remember that under the cover of being "superior" many women of color were raped, and even with the blood of white fathers' little boys and girls still were regulated to nonhuman status. If we would remember that with the existence of a Constitution and the suggestion of liberty for all, slavery built this country, and an

entire race was considered property. If we would remember these aspects, we will then be able to arrive at a destination where the insults to intelligence would easily surrender to logic.

Assumptions should never be presented as evidence of truth as the ability for individuals to visit the past requires impartial visitations. Consequently, the utilization of multiple disciplines in the examination of slavery and Christianity is not merely useful, it is totally necessary to arrive at the proper destination, the territory of the United Truth.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The relationship between Christianity and slavery strikes at the heart of Western culture as the uncovering of those impacted the most by these institutions have vanished in comparison to those who dictated the remembrance of history. That old phrase “history is written by the victor’s” has always been a good lie containing far too much truth within it, especially when these accounts of history remain dominated by forces with an agenda to diminish the legacy that has resulted from these customs. The recent social reckoning within the past years reveals the distance in which we must travel to bring the proper perspective into an accurate equation. Slavery has become the ghost of our collective past that we fear will haunt us, however, when numerous religious leaders admonish their faith to comply with a superficial decision because of their comfort with the oppression of slavery, the practice of portraying that the Bible-sanctioned slavery remains one of the histories biggest disappointments. Seeking to determine if Christianity had a relationship with slavery has provided evidence of an affiliation that has birthed different versions of tyranny, hatred, and animosity among the inhabitants of the United States. When properly examined, explored, and analyzed, the discoveries within the dynamic of slavery not only being established in a Christian nation but being nurtured, offers antidotes to honest research while presenting obstacles to resolutions at the same time. The inconvenience of the truth often uncovers the sincere nature of men, within this nature it comes with an opportunity to truly learn from the past.

Introduction

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us, God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement: because as he is, so are we in this world. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?⁶²

The ease in which the Christianity of this land has openly embraced the evils of slavery presents a case of an institutional example of organized religion being inextricably bound to a status quo and forfeiting its obligation to practice the art of love. The beloved disciple John spoke to this neglect as he highlighted the inability to love God with hatred of one's brother existing in your heart. Even within my travels to southern states, I have visited beautiful churches that have outlived the periods of slavery, reconstruction, and segregation, and wondered to myself what was the drive of Christians who stood firm in supporting the peculiar institution of slavery. How could these outward organizations weaponize the Bible to construct better slaves? Sections of the Bible that might explicitly contradict the few proof texts slaveholders quoted to justify themselves became valuable material within the scope of the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Josiah Priest sums up the stance of Christian's who backed the institution of slavery with a posture towards slavery in this matter:

Although we believe that the institution of slavery received "the sanction of the Almighty in the Patriarchal age;" "that it was incorporated into the only national constitution which ever emanated from God;" "that its legality was recognized, and its relative duties regulated by our Savior, when upon earth;" that it was established in wisdom, and has been wisely continued through all ages, and handed down to us in mercy; and that the relation of master and servant harmonizes strictly with the best interests of the inferior or African race in particular, in securing to him that protection and support which his native imbecility of intellect disqualifies him from securing for himself; yet do we most

⁶² 1 John 3:14-20, *King James Version*.

cordially reprobate any abuse of the relation by the superior power, or any undue exercise of authority, by the master over the slave—holding it to be an unwavering, uncompromising truth, that a fearful retribution is in reservation for all the violators of the wisely-established decrees of God, in this respect. There are certain obligations and duties which every master owes to his slave, that are as binding and indispensable as are the duties and obligations which he owes to his God, his country, or himself. These discharged, in accordance with the will of high Heaven, and the mere fact of being a slaveholder will not, in our humble judgment, debar a man from an entrance into that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”⁶³

This attitude was a disposition that was shared with members of the Christian community that not only supported slavery but also thrived with slavery as an commodity. Within their understanding of the Bible, they opted to attack enslaved Africans and present a case of justification that rested on countless theories of inferiority. Priest continues:

Our individual views in the subject of a national system of colonization, as applicable to the FREE BLACK population of the United States, may be regarded, at first sight, perhaps, as somewhat novel, and wanting in the essential qualities of age and precedent, or experience; but the reader may rest assured, that they have been submitted to the inspection of many of our prominent citizens and leading statesmen, and have received their unqualified approval, without exception. The existence of free blacks in any community, whether free or slave, is universally admitted to be an evil of no minor consideration. Their removal, therefore, is a matter deeply affecting the interests and well-being of both races. Their present number and natural increase, places this beyond the reach of individual enterprise. The resources of the general government must, therefore, be brought into requisition in the removal of this, as well as any other evil of a general or national character. How this may be done in this case, in a manner harmonizing with the true interests of both races, is a theme certainly not unworthy of the candid consideration of any American citizen.

While approaching his audience with poor and false information, Priest considers it his duty to educate his readers with the method and ideology of Proslavery Christians. Within his observations one of the main emphasis's that he articulates is an constant assault on the perceived inferiority of enslaved Africans as he places this attribute at the center of his argument:

On the subject of “Slavery, as it relates to the Negro, or African Race, Examined in the Light of Circumstances, History, and the Holy Scriptures; with an Account of the Black Man’s Color, Causes of his State of Servitude, and Traces of his Character, as well in

⁶³ Josiah Priest, *Bible Defense of Slavery: 1788-1851*, vi-vii.

Ancient as in Modern Times, with Strictures on Abolitionism,” the reader may confidently expect to find a work of great research and ability—one of deep interest, and well worthy his candid perusal. The author has sought, in the oracles of God. In authentic history, and in the analogies of nature, the key to the mystery of the degradation, through the unchronicled ages of the past, of the negro race. The fact of the inferiority and consequent subordination of the black race to the white, being in accordance with the will of the Supreme Ruler of the universe, is not like a mathematical problem, susceptible of absolute demonstration; yet we think the readers of this work will acknowledge that the author has let in a flood of light upon this deeply interesting subject, through the mist in which ignorance and misguided sympathy has enveloped it.⁶⁴

Careful examination of the relationship between Christianity and slavery offers insight into the accurate stance that America has expressed its level of comfort with its African American population. The measure of clarity that accompanied slavery presents one of the biggest misconceptions while also providing one of the oldest lies in the history of humanity. Reducing a population of people based on the content of their skin, not only destroys the moral standard, but inability to reconcile a race of people has led to anger, unhappiness, or troubling behavior that has become the consistent norm of a relationship. Therefore, is no wonder that a toxic partnership is all that remains. Thus, the standard of reducing groups of people within the history of this country highlights the inability to function on equal terms. The literature of Christians who sustained slavery implied that the inferiority of their society was a product of God’s divine nature for enslaved Africans and their descendants. Their desperation to justify their actions produced them sourcing the Bible as their evidence, rejecting tenants and principles of the main character of scripture, and using silence on the issue of slavery as means to torture the heathen souls who they encountered.

The legacy of this mentality has impacted every level of respectability within the structural mobility of the current and future generations of this Christian nation. The utilization of race dictates one’s lifestyle, success, and happiness. The faults of this relationship have

⁶⁴ Josiah Priest, *Bible Defense of Slavery: 1788-1851*, viii.

become a weapon of mass destruction that has a wide range of consequences. Christianity and slavery relationships has threatened the natural function of existing with others who don't share the same culture, which in turn can leave African Americans with the feeling of walking on eggshells, or one group always pointing out the negative, moodiness. The abusiveness of this dynamic places strenuous pressures on religious practices as well as secular norms. The many conflicts within this relationship have not been fully addressed within the history of this country, instead of both parties being made whole, the relationship between Christianity and slavery has produced children over time with names such as Jim Crow, segregation, and mass incarceration.

These heirs to slavery and Christianity gathered their histories and provided additional layers of frustration that hinders any real growth. The denial of love, peace, and compassion has placed the Christian who backs slavery and his allies on a trajectory of experiencing loftier rewards while the enslaved African was abridged. Yet, within the Proslavery Christian disposition, the Bible was not only depended upon but was utilized as a measure of moral compensation. The love for one's brother in the light of the inability to lay eyes upon the God of the Bible not only was a foreign fantasy but held no ground to slaveholders and defenders of slavery as the attraction of slavery assassinated many of the percepts of God's word. Christian enthusiasts of slavery exercised little to no degree of discipline in handling their literature and their lost cause for slavery. In this sense, they have conducted themselves as partakers who sought to preserve the evil system of slavery. The opposite stance that resided within the confines of Anti-slavery Christians sought to confront these double standards.

Anti-slavery Christians

On May 12, 1846, Frederick Douglass provided clarity to the struggle placed upon the feet of slaves in a public meeting hosted by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery at Finsbury

Chapel. He spoke to a crowd of some 2,500 people for nearly three hours about slavery in America in which he proclaims:

Now, what is this system of slavery? This is the subject of my lecture this evening — what is the character of this institution? I am about to answer the inquiry, what is American slavery? I do this the more readily, since I have found persons in this country who have identified the term slavery with that which I think it is not, and in some instances, I have feared, in so doing, have rather (unwittingly, I know,) detracted much from the horror with which the term slavery is contemplated. It is common in this country to distinguish every bad thing by the name of slavery. Intemperance is slavery; to be deprived of the right to vote is slavery, says one; to have to work hard is slavery, says another; and I do not know but that if we should let them go on, they would say that to eat when we are hungry, to walk when we desire to have exercise, or to minister to our necessities, or have necessities at all, is slavery. I do not wish for a moment to detract from the horror with which the evil of intemperance is contemplated — not at all; nor do I wish to throw the slightest obstruction in the way of any political freedom that any class of persons in this country may desire to obtain. But I am here to say that I think the term slavery is sometimes abused by identifying it with that which it is not. Slavery in the United States is the granting of that power by which one man exercises and enforces a right of property in the body and soul of another. The condition of a slave is simply that of the brute beast. He is a piece of property — a marketable commodity, in the language of the law, to be bought or sold at the will and caprice of the master who claims him to be his property; he is spoken of, thought of, and treated as property. His own good, his conscience, his intellect, his affections, are all set aside by the master. The will and the wishes of the master are the law of the slave. He is as much a piece of property as a horse. If he is fed, he is fed because he is property. If he is clothed, it is with a view to the increase of his value as property. Whatever of comfort is necessary to him for his body or soul that is inconsistent with his being property, is carefully wrested from him, not only by public opinion, but by the law of the country. He is carefully deprived of everything that tends in the slightest degree to detract from his value as property. He is deprived of education. God has given him an intellect; the slaveholder declares it shall not be cultivated. If his moral perception leads him in a course contrary to his value as property, the slaveholder declares he shall not exercise it.⁶⁵

Approaching the institution of slavery with an exhausted disposition, Douglass allows himself to highlight the totality of the American system of human bondage. By distancing Americans' version of slavery from the practice of identifying any hardship as somehow similar to being classified as human chattel, he was able to show the differences in mentality while also

⁶⁵ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*... New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855, 409-410.

emphasizing that the law assisted the system of slavery in several ways. His ability to show how his perspective of slavery shouldn't be minimized speaks to sociality norms within this period.

Nonetheless, his willingness to galvanize his audience with his experience permitted his stance to startle their observations of slavery into a retable feature. His maturity diffused any tension that would cause opposition. He continues:

But you will ask me, can these things be possible in a land professing christianity? Yes, they are so; and this is not the worst. No; a darker feature is yet to be presented than the mere existence of these facts. I have to inform you that the religion of the southern states, at this time, is the great supporter, the great sanctioner of the bloody atrocities to which I have referred. While America is printing tracts and bibles; sending missionaries abroad to convert the heathen; expending her money in various ways for the promotion of the gospel in foreign lands — the slave not only lies forgotten, uncared for, but is trampled under foot by the very churches of the land. What have we in America? Why, we have slavery made part of the religion of the land. Yes, the pulpit there stands up as the great defender of this cursed *institution*, as it is called. Ministers of religion come forward and torture the hallowed pages of inspired wisdom to sanction the bloody deed. They stand forth as the foremost, the strongest defenders of this "institution." As a proof of this, I need not do more than state the general fact, that slavery has existed under the droppings of the sanctuary of the south for the last two hundred years, and there has not been any war between the *religion* and the *slavery* of the south. Whips, chains, gags, and thumb-screws have all lain under the droppings of the sanctuary, and instead of rusting from off the limbs of the bondman, those droppings have served to preserve them in all their strength. Instead of preaching the gospel against this tyranny, rebuke, and wrong, ministers of religion have sought, by all and every means, to throw in the background whatever in the bible could be construed into opposition to slavery, and to bring forward that which they could torture into its support. This I conceive to be the darkest feature of slavery, and the most difficult to attack, because it is identified with religion, and exposes those who denounce it to the charge of infidelity. Yes, those with whom I have been laboring, namely, the old organization anti-slavery society of America, have been again and again stigmatized as infidels, and for what reason? Why, solely in consequence of the faithfulness of their attacks upon the slaveholding religion of the southern states, and the northern religion that sympathizes with it. I have found it difficult to speak on this matter without persons coming forward and saying, "Douglass, are you not afraid of injuring the cause of Christ? You do not desire to do so, we know; but are you not undermining religion?" This has been said to me again and again, even since I came to this country, but I cannot be induced to leave off these exposures. I love the religion of our blessed Savior. I love that religion that comes from above, in the "wisdom of God. which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. I love that religion that sends its votaries to bind up the wounds of him that has fallen among thieves. I love that religion that makes it the duty of its disciples to visit the fatherless and the widow in their

affliction. I love that religion that is based upon the glorious principle, of love to God and love to man; which makes its followers do unto others as they themselves would be done by. If you demand liberty to yourself, it says, grant it to your neighbors. If you claim a right to think for yourself, it says, allow your neighbors the same right. If you claim to act for yourself, it says, allow your neighbors the same right. It is because I love this religion that I hate the slaveholding, the woman-whipping, the mind-darkening, the soul-destroying religion that exists in the southern states of America. It is because I regard the one as good, and pure, and holy, that I cannot but regard the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. Loving the one I must hate the other; holding to the one I must reject the other.

I may be asked, why I am so anxious to bring this subject before the British public — why I do not confine my efforts to the United States? My answer is, first, that slavery is the common enemy of mankind, and all mankind should be made acquainted with its abominable character. My next answer is, that the slave is a man, and, as such, is entitled to your sympathy as a brother. All the feelings, all the susceptibilities, all the capacities, which you have, he has. He is a part of the human family. He has been the prey — the common prey — of christendom for the last three hundred years, and it is but right, it is but just, it is but proper, that his wrongs should be known throughout the world. I have another reason for bringing this matter before the British public, and it is this: slavery is a system of wrong, so blinding to all around, so hardening to the heart, so corrupting to the morals, so deleterious to religion, so sapping to all the principles of justice in its immediate vicinity, that the community surrounding it lack the moral stamina necessary to its removal. It is a system of such gigantic evil, so strong, so overwhelming in its power, that no one nation is equal to its removal. It requires the humanity of christianity, the morality of the world to remove it. Hence, I call upon the people of Britain to look at this matter, and to exert the influence I am about to show they possess, for the removal of slavery from America. I can appeal to them, as strongly by their regard for the slaveholder as for the slave, to labor in this cause. I am here, because you have an influence on America that no other nation can have. You have been drawn together by the power of steam to a marvelous extent; the distance between London and Boston is now reduced to some twelve or fourteen days, so that the denunciations against slavery, uttered in London this week, may be heard in a fortnight in the streets of Boston, and reverberating amidst the hills of Massachusetts. There is nothing said here against slavery that will not be recorded in the United States. I am here, also, because the slaveholders do not want me to be here; they would rather that I were not here. I have adopted a maxim laid down by Napoleon, never to occupy ground which the enemy would like me to occupy. The slave-holders would much rather have me, if I will denounce slavery, denounce it in the northern states, where their friends and supporters are, who will stand by and mob me for denouncing it. They feel something as the man felt, when he uttered his prayer, in which he made out a most horrible case for himself, and one of his neighbors touched him and said, "My friend, I always had the opinion of you that you have now expressed for yourself — that you are a very great sinner." Coming from himself, it was all very well, but coming from a stranger it was rather cutting. The slaveholders felt that when slavery was denounced among themselves, it was not so bad; but let one of the slaves get loose, let him summon the people of Britain, and make known to them the conduct of the slaveholders toward their slaves, and it cuts them to the

quick, and produces a sensation such as would be produced by nothing else. The power I exert now is something like the power that is exerted by the man at the end of the lever; my influence now is just in proportion to the distance that I am from the United States.⁶⁶

Within this effective speech, Douglass identifies the aspects of the relationship between Christianity and slavery with a perspective only someone who overcame slavery could provide. His ability to frame his articulation of the Christian traditions within Americans' relationship to slavery bears witness to his condemnation of the institution. Seeking to expand and expose the full detailed of the story of slavery, Douglass is not satisfied with seeing his words reach the ears and hearts of men within the United States, thus his presence in England allows others to embrace the reality of the relationship between Christianity and slavery within the United States. He accurately exposes how the United States of America's inability to liberate all its citizens provided a nightmare for enslaved Africans and their descendants while proving that a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal was a partly reality, as Africans who were forced to migrate to America have openly been absence of attaining liberty and denied equality. The undemocratic institution of slavery restricted and left slaves languishing in societal backwaters. The national dilemma of race left anti-slavery Christians fretting about a democratic replica of liberty and justice for all. Enslaved Africans were profoundly alienated, expressly dehumanized, and socially ostracized while the banner of Christianity freely dominated the national religion of the history of the United States. Douglass must have esteemed the irony of having a statue of liberty while living in a state of bondage.

The racial ideology of Christians who embraced the confines of slavery, openly questioned the human worth of enslaved Africans and made it intolerable for these humans to exist or attain genuine liberty. The racial subordination of slavery confronted the literature of

⁶⁶ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*... New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855, 416-419.

Proslavery ideology as men such as Douglass overcame slavery and produced evidence that slaves were men and women capable of great deeds. This sharp contrast between Priest's stance and Douglass's temperament brings clarity to the lofty ideals of holding slaves in permanent second-class status. The onus or burden of providing useful verification of being human stained the political elite and reduced the nobility of Christian stakeholders within the historical clarity of the United States. Race relations from the historic and cross-national perspective have been a victim of the long-standing ramifications of the relationship between Christianity and slavery, and as Douglass profoundly stated, "that a slave is a man, and, as such, is entitled to your sympathy as a brother. All the feelings, all the susceptibilities, all the capacities, which you have, he has. He is a part of the human family. He has been the prey — the common prey — of christendom for the last three hundred years, and it is but right, it is but just, it is but proper, that his wrongs should be known throughout the world."⁶⁷

Thus, the caste system of slavery within the confines of a Christian country enforced with open violence, supported by Biblical research, and sustained with an undeniable profit was embraced by-laws, upheld by courts, and universally incorporated by politics. Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois accurately predicted that "the problem of the color line" would be an issue that survived the 19th century and impacted the 20th century. His foresight internalizes the reality of many African Americans as race relations in the United States remain a confrontational experience. The virtue of Christianity coupled with the legacy of slavery has shaped many of the beliefs that influenced the overall societal practices within the history of the United States. The misconception that the hostility towards African Americans has decreased still the peculiar institution of slavery has not fed the shores of America and has left many opting to be indifferent to this reality, as the

⁶⁷ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*... New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855, 419.

traumatic of the day-to-day experience of regular African Americans tends to exhaust reasonable explanations. Christianity consists of the perseverance for fellowship, yet even with the emergence of a stable African American middle class presenting hope, the inability of this nation to experience racial fellowship remains a burden left to future generations to resolve. The social conditions in contemporary America have yet to discover meaningful solutions to the problem of race that Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois discussed in 1903.

The legacy of the relationship between Christianity and slavery has shifted the dream that race might someday become an insignificant category in our way of life. The African American underclass and, the increasing poverty of the African American lower working classes is bad and getting worse in cities of the Old South and across the United States in general. The moral sensibilities that have developed from these two insinuations have produced the avenues of stereotypes that associate color with a crime in America, as well as color as the face of drug addiction, and color as the mascot of poor school performance. The family breakdown of African Americas is never mentioned in its precise fashion as other stereotypes such as welfare dependency, neighbor decay, and overly sexual mythologies dominate debates. What has been rebuffed, but what must be documented is that this is a product of the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The predicament of slavery has not been fully seen as a severe struggle that was deeply associated with the Christianity of America. Thus, these refugees who dwelled in ghettos reside in a society that not only looks down on them while painting a picture of the love of Christ but willingly employs susceptible typecasts that denounced African Americas as less than humans years after these perceptions were created to justify cruelty.

The despair of the legacy of the relationship between Christianity and slavery has produced an internalized sense of helplessness that Anti-slavery Christian literature captured but

Proslavery Christians rejected and allowed their children to inherit their mindset. The collection of data and analyses that fiercely contends that African American progress has leveled the playing field, fail to realize that the empirical issues of equality have foundational roots within this relationship. The battle for equality cannot be summed up with misguided demands of insisting that race is not a problem or that slavery and Christianity having a relationship has not shaped many aspects of everyday life. The stereotypes utilized within the period of slavery have only matured into different categories that stressed different levels of inferiority. Societies are not combinations of unconnected individuals creating themselves anew, their development is deeply woven together by the process of time, events, and groups of people who wish to join in a common interest. For enslaved African and their descendants, this common interest was never offered to them, for they have the unfortunate reality of not being immigrants to America, but rather victims of America. Therefore, it is unsettling to witness a victim being told to overlook their pain in order to allow their perpetrator to move past an offensive history. But this is what has occurred within the complex web of social doggedness, as generations of Christians continue to plea for African Americans to just move on.

The historical influences of the relationship between Christianity and slavery leverage lessons from our history that provides clarity to the systems of oppression that have transformed the lives of those harmed and foster inequity while relying on religion to accommodate its misbehavior. Within the examination of America's deepest wounds, the trauma of slavery has shaped the way African Americans live, the way they love, and the way they make sense of the world. Within the history of this country, far too many policymakers, legal personnel, and trusted leaders have not been concerned with healing these wounds. The voices of Christians who openly accepted slavery permitted these individuals to make sweeping indictments of African

Americans while suppressing their need and will for survival. The appropriate actions associated with changing the path of society call for the opportunity to offer sincere hearing of the oppressed. This is the grain of truth that can overcome the continual acts of aggression that allow race to be a dividing factor within the existence of this country.

Conclusion

The relationship between Christianity and slavery lies at the root of racial inequality and has been seen as an experience that has in some way helped the oppressed. African Americans natural resilience over time allowed them to cope and adjust to the different levels of oppression that came their way. However, the effects of these two institutions co-existing have produced a society that sees the importance of one's social background, cultural affinities, and communal influence, which keeps African Americans at a disadvantage. Nevertheless, the innate reality is that, for some three centuries and counting, the collective understanding of enslaved Africans and their descendants have been shaped by economic, social, and political institutions that have been overwhelmingly Christian and profoundly opposed to racial equality. The oppressive history of America has produced an underclass culture that has forever been changed by actions that redefined their lives. Thus, the required exposure of this relationship offers a genuine discourse of reasonable consideration. The continued battle with poverty requires contemplation within the demographic and economic conditions in wealth accumulation as well and it should not require mammoth powers of perception to see how this deprivation conveys how the shameful relationship between Christianity and slavery has influenced race relations within America.

Yet, there is a crowd of doubters who insist that African Americans should wait for better days and incorporate these realities as shortcomings to the otherwise rich Christian legacy of

America. Those who present the United States as a country that employed a Christian love that shaped the foundational years of the creation of this nation tend to overlook the role which Christianity played within slavery and even the discovery of the Americans. David K. O'Rourke asserts:

In sixteenth and seventeenth century North America the Spanish Catholics and then English Protestants maintained that they were building a godly new world. Despite their religious differences these men, steeped in religious imagery, described their efforts using similar religious metaphors. They had crossed the Ocean Sea to implant their own visions of a New Jerusalem, A Utopia, a City on a Hill, a Light in the Wilderness, and a new Kingdom for God and King. Judging by the piety of their letters and their protestations of godly intent, one might expect them to have created settlements beloved either of monks and mystics or the righteous and elect. And yet the bases for the households they established were far from religious, at least the way religion was understood in later years. Whatever visions they hoped to realize they first had to establish their own households. For their world was still a world of households and householders. From the English-speaking coastlands of New England to the Spanish-speaking sierra of Mexico what these founding gentlemen desired most of all were honor and standing, power and wealth. Their households were to be the bases from which they sought their fortunes, sometimes the means and places where their fortunes were realized, and almost always the symbols of the honored status and prosperity that they all desired and sometimes achieved. And yet few if any of their goals were to be found in the sacred texts they annotated and quoted at length if Protestant, or enshrined in sacred sites if Catholic. But that mattered little.⁶⁸

Thus, the perception that America adhered to Christian standards when arriving on foreign shores plays to the fantasy of a country that strived to create a religious safe heaven. While we cannot change our reprehensible past, we must not be unsympathetic to the present-day anguish that is linked to the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The dispositions of African Americans, their behaviors, and their trauma are not just connected to such historical practices, but the cultural imposition upon a pristine Euro-American background constructed the racial practices that thrive within every avenue of our civilization. The marginal instrument of the relationship between Christianity and slavery reveals that there are multiple legacies of this

⁶⁸ David K. O'Rourke, *How America's First Settlers Invented Chattel Slavery: Dehumanizing Native Americans and Africans with Language, Laws, Guns, and Religion*, 5-6.

partnership as the understanding of the impact of such connections is plausible and mutually exclusive to racial inequality. The conceptualized cumulative of slavery has resulted in African Americans in varying degrees being embedded in consistent versions of oppression.

As Jordan T. Watkins profoundly exclaims:

Throughout the historicization process, the articulation and re-articulation of historical readings began to expose the archaism of America's most sacred texts and the discrete nature of its most hallowed historical epochs. As Americans began to confront history in new ways, many discovered that their favored pasts were not golden ages to reclaim but troubled eras with universal promises to fulfill.⁶⁹

The cost of liberty can be articulated fully by Fredrick Douglass once again, he addressed the sobering reminder of the struggle for liberty and freedom of those who encountered slavery within his speech, "*What to the Slave is the Fourth of July*." He declares:

I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence bequeathed by your fathers has been shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony.⁷⁰

This disposition highlights how the definition of terms such as freedom and liberty are viewed by nonwhites who were not privy to its classification. The population of slaves had grown to roughly 700,000 when the United States declared its independence in 1776. In fact, during the war for independence from Britain, many African Americans saw an opportunity to claim freedom in the ideals of the Revolution and the reality of war while Americans experienced a fight against an oppressive government that operated overseas. However, the birth

⁶⁹ Jordan Watkins, *Slavery and Sacred Texts of the Bible, the Constitution, and Historical Consciousness in Antebellum America*, 4.

⁷⁰"Frederick Douglass: What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 10 (1976): 32-37.

of a country built on egalitarian principles insisted on expanding slavery rather than extending freedoms to African Americans.

Notwithstanding, within this moment in history, Douglass was the most famous African American in the United States and he had become an esteemed orator for the cause of freedom and confronted the indifference that America's celebration of independence presented for the confrontation of such a dynamic, with this opportunity Douglass expressed the denial of such privileges that he and his people encountered. The cost of freedom and liberty saw the institution of slavery survive and expand into new territories after the War for independence as the justification for slavery made its way into documentation. Reverend Peter Fontaine asserts:

if enslaving our fellow creatures be a practice agreeable to Christianity, it is answered in a great measure in many treatises at home, to which I refer you. I shall only mention something of our present state here. Like Adam, we are all apt to shift off the blame from ourselves and lay it upon others, how justly in our case you may judge. The Negroes are enslaved by the Negroes themselves before they are purchased by the masters of the ships who bring them here. It is, to be sure, at our choice whether we buy them or not, so this then is our crime, folly, or whatever you will please to call it.⁷¹

Consequently, the relationship between Christianity and slavery has influenced, shaped, and fostered several different opinions. These differences remain hostile and often have undermined progress as the color line has evolved into a never-ending debate. The role of Christianity within slavery presents an unavoidable hurdle that has divided generations, while also escaping the common demand for more.

⁷¹ *Education in the United States— A Documentary History, Volume 1*, edited by Sol Cohen, Random House, Inc., 1974.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Controversy Between Caius Gracchus and Opimius in Reference to the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States (Georgetown, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1827), 20.

Dunbar, Erica Armstrong. 2017. *Never Caught: Washington's Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge*. New York: 37 Ink.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1953651&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

“Petition to the General Assembly of Virginia from Brunswick County, November 10, 1785” in F.T. Schmidt and B. R. Wilhelm, eds., “Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly* (January 1973) 30, 142-44.

Washington, George. “Letter from George Washington to Robert Morris, 12 April 1786,” National Archives, Founders Online,
<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-04-02-0019> (accessed July 30, 2021).

Primary Sources

Anderson, Matthew. *Presbyterianism: Its Relation to the Negro*. Philadelphia: John McGill White Co., 1897.

Bellamy, Thomas. *The Benevolent Planters. A Dramatic Piece*. 1789.

Congressional Debates, 20 Cong., 1st sess., 10 January 1828, 967-68.

Dalcho, Frederick *Practical Considerations Founded on the Scriptures, Relative to the Slave Population of South Carolina by a South-Carolinian* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1823).

Davies, Ebenezer. *American scenes and Christian slavery; a recent tour of four thousand miles in the United States*. London, John Snow, 1849.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963. *The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches*. Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903.

Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom ...* New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855.

"FREDERICK DOUGLASS: What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 10 (1976): 32-37. Accessed August 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41065959>.

Fuller, Richard, and Francis Wayland. *Domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution : in a correspondence between the Rev. Richard Fuller of Beaufort, S.C. and the Rev. Francis Wayland of Providence, R.I.*, 5th ed. New York: L. Colby, 1847. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926* (accessed July 29, 2022). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CY0101918377/SABN?u=vic_liberty&sid=bookmark-SABN&xid=8c9a2339&pg=1.

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Print.

Hague, William, Francis Wayland, and Richard Fuller. *Christianity and slavery: a review of the correspondence between Richard Fuller, D.D., of Beaufort, South Carolina, and Francis Wayland, D.D., of Providence, Rhode Island: on domestic slavery considered as a scriptural institution*. Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, 1847. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926* (accessed October 30, 2022). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CY0108029792/SABN?u=vic_liberty&sid=summon&xid=4654308e&pg=1.

Laws of Barbados, 203-4.

Leone, Bruno *Slavery: Opposing Viewpoints*, Editor, American History Series, Greenhaven Press, Inc.

Kingsley, Zephaniah. *A treatise on the patriarchal system of society, as it exists in some governments and colonies in America, and in the United States, under the name of slavery, with its necessity and advantages*, 4th ed. [Florida?]: [s.n.], 1834. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926* (accessed September 4, 2022). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CY0102106055/SABN?u=vic_liberty&sid=summon&xid=dfc5f779&pg=1.

Nisbet, Richard *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture Or a Defense of the West-India Planters from the Aspersions Thrown Out Against Them by the Author of a Pamphlet Entitled "An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America upon Slavekeeping," by a West Indian* (Philadelphia: NP, 1773); *Annals of Congress*, 16 Cong., 1 sess., 26 January 1820, 269. *National Intelligencer*, 30 July 1819.

Personal Slavery Established by the Suffrages of Custom and Right Reason. Being a Full Answer to the Gloomy and Visionary Reveries, of all the Fanatical and Enthusiastical Writers on That Subject (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1773, 11.

Priest, Josiah. *Slavery, as it relates to the Negro, or African race: examined in the light of circumstances, history, and the Holy Scriptures: with an account of the origin of the black man's color, causes of his state of servitude, and traces of his character as well in ancient as in modern times: with strictures on abolitionism*. Albany: Printed by C. Van Benthuysen and Co, 1843. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926*.

Quarles, Benjamin, "Lord Dunmore as Liberator," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15: 498.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2936904>.

The petition cited by St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1970), pp. 23-24.

Richmond Enquirer, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 3 December 1819. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.
 <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.lccn/sn84024735/1820-12-03/ed-1/seq-2/>>

Richmond Enquirer, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 12 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.
 <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-12/ed-1/seq-2/>>

Richmond Enquirer, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 15 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.
 <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-15/ed-1/seq-2/>>

Richmond Enquirer, [volume] (Richmond, Va.), 20 February 1820. *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.
 <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.lccn/sn84024735/1820-02-20/ed-1/seq-2/>>

Southern Review (February 1828) 1, 233.

St. Louis Enquirer, 29 April 1820.

Thornwell, James Henley. 1850. *The rights and the duties of masters. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, S.C., for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population*. Charleston, S.C.: Press of Walker & James.

Van Buskirk, Judith. "Crossing the Lines: African-Americans in the New York City Region during the British Occupation, 1776-1783," *Pennsylvania History* 65 (1998): 78.

Secondary Sources

Abzug, Robert H., and Stephen E. Maizlish, eds. *New Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America: Essays in Honor of Kenneth M. Stampp*. University Press of Kentucky, 1986.

Africanus, Leo, Robert Brown, and John Pory. *The History and Description of Africa And of the Notable Things Therein Contained*. Place of publication not identified :: publisher not identified,, 2010.

„And on This Rock I Will Build My Church“. A New Edition of Philip Schaff's „History of the Christian Church“ *Medieval Church History. From Gregory VII. to the Protestant Reformation A.D. 1049-1517*. Hamburg: Disserta Verlag, 2017.

- Bender, Thomas., John. Ashworth, David Brion. Davis, and Thomas L. Haskell. *The Antislavery Debate Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Bell. James B. *The Imperial Origins of the King's Church in Early America, 1607-1783* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* Revised and enlarged edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Blackburn, Robin. *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*. London: Verso, 2010.
- Brown, Robert, ed. *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained : Written by Al-Hassan Ibn-Mohammed Al-Wezaz Al-Fasi, a Moor, Baptised As Giovanni Leone, but Better Known As Leo Africanus. Done into English in the Year 1600, by J....* Farnham: Hakluyt Society, 2010.
- Briedenbaugh, Carl. *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, ideas, Personalities, and Politics 1689-1775*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Cervantes, Fernando. *Conquistadores A New History of Spanish Discovery and Conquest*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2021.
- Colon Jose Bethany Copeland and Darrel Dexter. 2018. *American History* [High school grades 9-12 student edition] ed. Orlando Florida: HMH Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Dallimore, Arnold A.. *George Whitefield: God's Anointed Servant in the Great Revival of the Eighteenth Century*. United States: Crossway, 2010.
- de Wet, Chris L. *The Unbound God Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought* /. London :: Routledge, 2017.
- Doll, Peter M. *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity: Imperial Anglicanism in British North America, 1745-1795*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt). *Black Reconstruction in America; an Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966.
- Eltis, David, David Richardson, David Brion Davis, and David W. Blight. *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. New Haven, [Connecticut] :: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992.

"FREDERICK DOUGLASS: What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 10 (1976): 32-37. Accessed August 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41065959>.

Frankopan, Peter. *The First Crusade: The Call from the East*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Fuller, Richard, Francis Wayland, Nathan A. Finn, and Keith Harper. *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*. First Mercer University Press annotated edition. Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 2008.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* [First edition]. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.

Goodell, William. *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Features Shown by its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts* (New York: American and Foreign AntiSlavery Society, 1853), 105.

Handy, Robert T. "Negro Christianity and American Church Historiography," in *Reinterpretations in American Church History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

historynet.com/Zephaniah-kingsley-champion-of-free-blacks.

Hochschild, Adam. *Bury the Chains: the British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*. London: Pan, 2012.

Hugh, Chisholm. "McDuffie, George". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 17 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 214.

Irons, Charles F., 'Fishers of Men, 1680–1792', *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008; online edn, North Carolina Scholarship Online, 24 July 2014), https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.5149/9780807888896_iron5, accessed 24 Aug. 2022.

Hannah-Jones, Nikole, The New York Times Magazine, Caitlin Roper, and Ilena Silverman. *The 1619 Project : a New Origin Story* /. New York :: One World,, 2021.

Leibiger, Stuart. *The Constitutional Convention of 1787 a Reference Guide*. Santa Barbara, California :: ABC-CLIO, 2019.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* /. Oxford ; New York :: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Loveland, Anne C. "Richard Furman's 'Questions on Slavery,' " *Baptist History and Heritage* (July 1975), 178.

Leo, John. Pory, and Robert Brown. *The History and Description of Africa and of the Notable Things Therein Contained. Volume I.* Farnham, Surrey ;: Ashgate, 2010.

Paquette, Robert L., Smith, Mark M. “*The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*” /. Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2010.

Matthews, Donald G. *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

Miller, Robert J. *Discovering Indigenous Lands : the Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Mumford, Kevin “After Hugh: Statutory Race Segregation in Colonial America. 1630-1725,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 43, no. 3 (1999): 280.

O’Rourke, David K. *How America’s First Settlers Invented Chattel Slavery : Dehumanizing Native Americans and Africans with Language, Laws, Guns, and Religion.* Peter Lang Copyright AG, 2005.

Stephen, Leslie. “Bellamy, Thomas (1745-1800)” *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 4. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

Thackston, J.A. (1908). *Primary And Secondary Education In South Carolina From 1780 To 1860* (Order No. 7322465).

Thomas, David, Emmanouela Grypeou, and Mark N Swanson. *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam.* Vol. 5. Leiden ; Boston :: Brill,, 2007

Watkins, Jordan. *Slavery and Sacred Texts the Bible, the Constitution, and Historical Consciousness in Antebellum America.* Cambridge;: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Woolverston, John Frederick, *Colonial Anglicanism in North America, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984.*

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/letters-of-Paul>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/letters-of-Peter>

Journal Articles

Debow’s review, *Agricultural, commercial, industrial progress and resources.* New Orleans [etc]; J.D.B. DeBow *The South Demands More Nergo Labor-Address to the People of Louisiana* [Volume 25, Issue: 5, Nov 1858; pp. 401-506. Making of America Journal Articles: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acg1336.1-25.005/499>

- Elkins, Stanley M.. *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. Accessed December 11, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Giles, Kevin. "The Biblical Argument for Slavery: Can the Bible Mislead? A Case Study in Hermeneutics." *Evangelical Quarterly* 66 (1994): p. 10
http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1994-1_003.pdf
- Harris, Tim. 2008, "JAMES II, THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION, AND THE DESTINY OF BRITAIN." *The Historical Journal* 51 (3). Cambridge University Press: 763-75.
doi:10.1017/50018246X08007012.
- Jeansonne, Glen. "Southern Baptist Attitudes Toward Slavery, 1845-1861." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1971): 510–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40579712>.
- Phillips, William D. *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjm6x>.
- Pincus, Steve. "Round-Table." *Britian and the world*. 2, no.2 (2010): 330-338.
- Massey, Gregory D. "The Limits of Antislavery Thought in the Revolutionary Lower South: John Laurens and Henry Laurens." *Journal of Southern History*: Vol. 63, No. 3, p 499-525.
- Maxwell, John Francis. *Slavery and the Catholic Church: The History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery* (Chichester: Barry Rose Publishers, 1975), 53.
- National Park Service, "Declaration House: Independence National Historical Park, Pennsylvania," www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/places-declarationhouse.html.
- "Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother" (1662), *Encyclopedia Virginia* (2020), enclopediavirginia.org/entries/negro-women-children-to-serve-according-to-the-codition-of-the-mother-1662/ .
- Ramsay, David. *History of the American Revolution*. Philadelphia, 1789. 234.
- Reddie, Anthony G., ed. *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity: 200 Years and No Apology*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010.
- Spangler, Jewel L. "Proslavery Presbyterians: Virginia's Conservative Dissenters in the Age of Revolution." *The Journal of Presbyterian History* (1997-) 78, no. 2 (2000): 111–23.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23335421>.
- Strickland, Arvarh E. Review of *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History*. *Civil War History* 15, no. 2 (1969): 174-176. [doi:10.1353/cwh.1969.0025](https://doi.org/10.1353/cwh.1969.0025).

