# The Debate over Slavery

The 1820’s, 1830’s and 1840’s saw a movement that sought to liberate the blacks from the bondage of slavery. The Second Great Awakening was a reformist movement, but one of its primary objectives was to abolish slavery. However, despite their good agenda, they did not have it easy as some individuals were determined to ensure that slavery never came to an end. The view of authors regarding the issue also differed with some of them being pro-slavery and others being antislavery (abolitionists).

## Pro-Slavery Writers

George Fitzhugh was one of those who advocated for slavery. He thought of the ‘negroes’ (the offensive term used to refer to blacks) as children who required to be governed. According to him, there were not yet mature, and thus the parenting or guidance of a master was needed (Fishel & Quarles, 1976). Another reason he used to justify his views was that blacks were not investors. Therefore, to avoid them becoming a burden to society in their old age, it was necessary to enslave them at their youth (Fishel & Quarles, 1976). Third, he believed that if they were given a fair chance at free competition, they would be outwitted by the whites who were far much superior. Fourth, offering them a chance to live in America was a favor given the hardships and severe conditions that they would be facing in their homeland if that had been the case (Fishel & Quarles, 1976). Thus, they needed to repay that favor, which to him was through slavery.

Dr. Cartwright argues that it was okay to keep slaves, as long as one treated them well. He says that Drapetomania, the disease that causes slaves to flee their masters, can be avoided by proper treatment (De Bow, 1967). Dr. Cartwright condemns the abolitionists as violating the will of God, by attempting to elevate the slaves to their level, rather than let them remain in the position that God intended for them, that of submission (De Bow, 1967).

James Henry Hammond uses one reason, to sum up why slavery is needed; in life, there has to be those doing the dirty tasks. These degraded duties are an essential cog in the production process. If there lacks someone to do them, then the whole production process is impossible. Furthermore, if everyone was required to perform those tasks, then there would be no people to carry out the more complex functions of driving progress and civilization (Hammond, 1858).

## Abolitionists

David Walker criticizes the American Society for abusing Christianity. They know all about the Israelites’ slavery in Egypt, yet they do the same to the Africans-Americans (Walker, 1995). He argues that the creator made whites as equal to the blacks. The same thing happens to them right from birth till death. Besides, according to Christianity, the whites as the blacks serve one master, Jesus Christ (Walker, 1995). So, the notion of having another master is a misguided one even to the European-Americans themselves.

Fredrick Douglas criticized the way that White Americans celebrated the liberalization of their country on independent day, yet they were not willing to grant the same to their slaves. The slaves were no less human, and they would also experience the same joy and happiness if they were set free (Foner, 1999). Calling on slaves to join them in the celebration was like mockery since they did not have the freedom. These celebrations only served to taint the image of America and make it more painful for the slaves to bear. Fred says that the harsh treatment afforded to slaves is evident for everyone to see. To sum it all, he condemns those justifying slavery with divinity, terming it as blasphemy. As long as slavery continues in America, the republicanism and Christianity will be nothing but pretense (Foner, 1999).

The American Anti-slavery Convention echoed the sentiments of those who fought hard to liberate America from the hands of the colonialists. In doing this, they wanted to show how the same people or their successors did not live to their words regarding their current treatment of slaves. Their slogan was that God had created all as equals and with some rights that no one deserved to take away, among them happiness and liberty (Garrison, 1852). These were the same rights that they were taking away from the slaves.

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