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The Debate over Slavery

In the Colonial period, pro-slavery historians have been defending the concept of slavery by giving the justification that it is a necessity of society. They have been expounding this evil as a positive good. They believed that black people were naturally inferior to the white people and slavery, while others believed that slavery was a means of providing protection to the blacks. Some justified it by saying that slavery maintained the progress of the society. James Henry Hammond justified slavery by saying that slaves are important in society to do menial tasks for the grinding routine of daily life. He believed that in order to have a balance and lead a progressive society, there is a need for such people who can carry out such trivial chores. This is also important to maintain the order and class system in any society (Hammond). Dr. Samuel Cartwright justified the slavery on a very peculiar stance that it was Deity’s will that Negros must be submissive to their white masters. He also believed that the God Almighty has declared it for them slavery should be their ultimate position. However, he also mentioned that the white masters should also be kind to their slaves but cannot give them a higher position than they are supposed to (Samuel). George Fitzhugh was a staunch supporter of slavery and justified it by his notion of white superiority over blacks. He believed that Negros are like the mistreated children who should be protected by their White masters. He also said that slavery in our white society is much better than in Africa or West Indies (Fitzhugh).

According to Hammond, the place of slaves in our society is the lowest and they are supposed to serve us, as they are the inferior of all kinds. He believed that there is no way whites should become slaves. However, the blacks are our slaves and we have elevated their position by giving them the honor to serve us. Cartwright believed that according to the divine laws, the status of Blacks in our society is to serve us and this law cannot be changed. However, slaves running away from their jobs is the abomination of our social practices. The masters are also accountable for maintaining the status system as guided by the Almighty. He also mentioned that slaves running away from their masters is a disease that can be healed with certain practices. Fitzhugh believed that the place of blacks in other societies is chaotic. Nevertheless, we have the responsibility of keeping them safe and providing them with their rights as social beings by making them our domestic slaves. All these pro-slavery documents share a contemptuous tone by stereotyping African Americans by declaring the blacks as the inferior species overall. However, in America, they are provided with status and are given the opportunity to serve the superior race.

The abolitionist authors in the colonial period have argued against slavery and the outright abolition of black rights. David Walker, a black from the South, raised his voice for his fellow black men who have been serving their white masters while their rights and identities were being dismissed. He called for all the slaves to revolt against their masters. He believed that slaves need to get rid of this evil because their masters want to kill them as they have no value and it is completely alright to either save yourselves or kill the ones who want to kill them (Walker). William Lloyd Garrison had been actively involved in the anti-slavery movement. He believed that slaves should be free of these shackles as their rights are taken away from them. He argued that they had been the subject of oppression and civil violation for a long time now. He declared the scriptures that promoted slavery for the blacks as null and void and said that these assumptions overthrow the concept of humanity (Garrison). Frederick Douglass argued against the declaration and questioned that what is in there for the slaves to enjoy and how the 4th of July is something to be cherished about? He has raised his voice for blacks and he wanted all the whites to understand how privileged they were as they kept on progressing while the blacks kept grinding away their rights in front of them. He had no sense of contentment, for he had seen the cruelty and the oppression in the black society and the only privilege they were given was to serve their white masters (Douglass).

Walker had extreme disagreements and disappointments with the American society as he questioned Jefferson several times in his speeches about the tyranny that Negros had to bear. He said that we had no worth to our White masters, that they could kill us and no one would bat an eye. He said we had been submissive to the rules made by this tyrant society. He had criticized the ‘Notes on Virginia’ by Jefferson and satirically had been asking people that did they have a soul left in their miserable bodies. He declared that White people could never be their friends until they treat them like ones. He said that they could let go of the past and could become a happy united nation. Garrison too had several conflicts with the American society and he said that it was against the right of human beings and their bodies being sold out to the American masters. He took a stand for his African counterparts that they enjoyed the same rights and laws yet they had been treated as if their existence did not matter. Douglas had raised his voice against the American slavery and pitied the worth of Declaration. He said that it seemed like a hideous and revolting effort to remind the Negros their value. He denounced every scripture, document and constitution that favored the concept of slavery.

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