

PROSLAVERY THOUGHT

*Looking at the issue of slavery
from the perspective
of Antebellum Southerners*

Based on Defending Slavery by Paul Finkelman

By Jim Phelan

TAH 2010



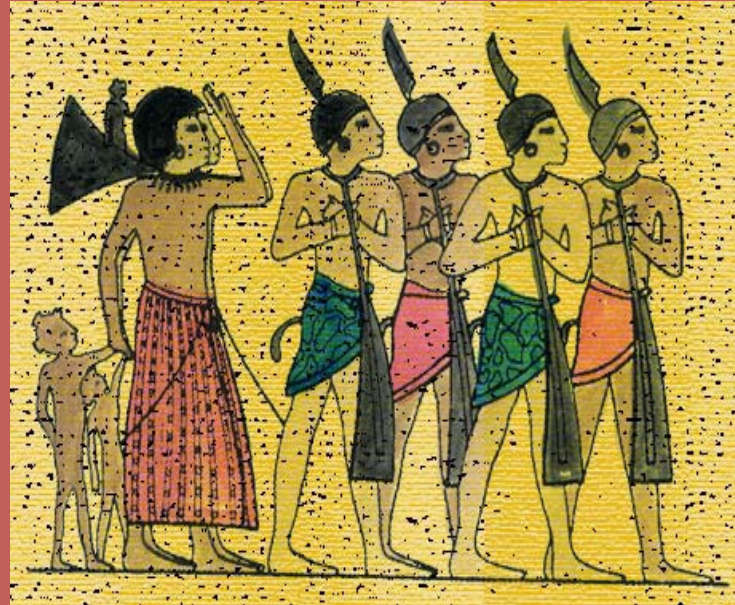
Southerners defended slavery from many different angles

- Religious
- Political
- Economical
- Historical
- Philosophical
- Scientific
- RACE THEORY



Religious

- Evidence of slaves in the Bible
- Turning “heathens” into Christians
- Many passages from the Bible relate to slaves
 - Job
 - Letters of Paul
 - Duties of a Christian
- Story of Noah...

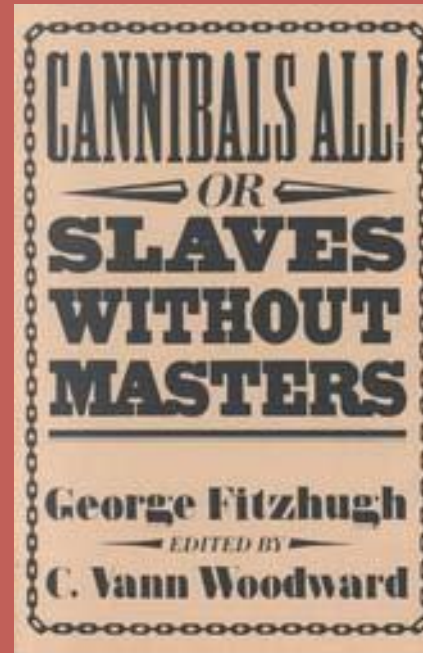


Hieroglyphs on ancient Egyptian tomb of slaves show early evidence of slavery.



Political

- Some Southerners believed that slavery was actually necessary to keep the U.S. political system in tact.
- Sen. James Hammond gave famous “mudsill” speech in Senate.
- George Fitzhugh wrote pamphlets and essays defending slavery politically.



George Fitzhugh wrote a defense of slavery called “Cannibals All!” which described life in the U.S. if slaves were free.

Economic

- Edmund Ruffin wrote essays on the economic benefits of slavery
- Believed that slave labor was more profitable than free labor
- Slaves can work for longer hours with no pay; free labor wages don't justify the slightly higher productivity



Edmund Ruffin

Historic

- Origin of the word from “Slavic”
- Slavery existed throughout ancient times (Israel, Egypt, Rome)



Philosophical

- “Natural Rights” theory drove the American Revolution
 - If government fails the people, the people have the right to change the gov’t
- “States’ Rights” theory drove the sectional tensions that led to the Civil War
 - The Federal government does not have the power to dictate what states can and cannot do



Scientific

- Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright wrote essay "Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race,"
- Highly respected and widely published doctor from the University of Louisiana
- Discussed two diseases which he claims are unique to African Americans.
 - "Drapetomania," a disease which causes slaves to run away
 - "Dysaesthesia Aethiopica," a disease causing "rascality" in black people free and enslaved.
 - Believed blacks were better suited to physical labor than whites.

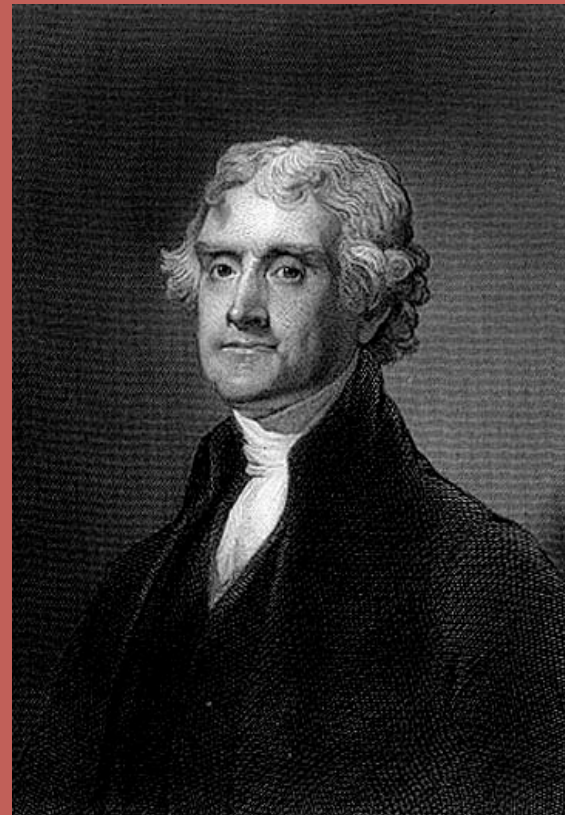


Samuel A. Cartwright



“Race Theory”

- Thomas Jefferson wrote about his thoughts on slaves
- “Notes on the State of Virginia”
- Blacks are inferior to whites
 - Intellect
 - Ability
 - Emotions
 - Unable to mix with whites



Thomas Jefferson



Summary

- Which defense of slavery do you think makes the most sense?
- Which argument makes the least sense?
- Can you see any arguments that overlap?
- Can you come up with a better defense of slavery?

