

As the campaign against slavery heated up, more Southerners began to defend the institution. Below are the arguments of Thomas Dew, who was a professor at William and Mary, and George McDuffie, who was a governor of South Carolina. These are not barefoot drunken hillbillies. They are educated men and leaders in the southern United States.

Thomas Dew

Let us now look a moment to the slave, and consider his position. Mr. Jefferson has described him as hating rather than loving his master. We assert again that Mr. Jefferson is not borne out by the fact. We are well convinced that there is nothing but the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, or brother and sister which produces a closer tie than the relation of master and servant. We do not hesitate to affirm that, throughout the whole slave-holding country, the slaves of a good master are his warmest, most constant, and most devoted friends. They have been accustomed to look up to him as their supporter, director, and defender. Everyone acquainted with southern slaves knows that the slave rejoices in the prosperity of his master.

A merrier being does not exist on the face of the globe than the Negro slave of the United States. They are happy and contented, and the master is much less cruel than is generally imagined. Why then, since the slave is happy and happiness is the great object of all animated creation, should we attempt to disturb his contentment by planting in his mind a vain and indefinite desire for liberty—a something which he cannot understand and which must inevitably dry up the very sources of his happiness?

George McDuffie

No human institution, in my opinion, is more clearly consistent with the will of God than slavery. And no one of his laws is written in more legible characters than that which consigns the African race to this condition as more conducive to their own happiness than any other with which they might meet. Whether we consult the sacred Scriptures or the lights of nature and reason, we shall find these truths as abundantly apparent as if written with a sunbeam in the heavens. Under both the Jewish and Christian branches of our religion, slavery existed with the wholehearted sanction of its prophets, its apostles, and finally its great Author. The ancient Hebrew fathers themselves, those chosen men of God, were slaveholders.

That the African Negro is destined by God to occupy this condition of servile dependence is not less clear. They have all the qualities that fit them for slaves and not one of those that would fit them to be freemen. Until the "African can change his skin," it will be in vain to attempt, by any human power, to make freemen of those whom God has doomed to be slaves.

Adapted from Thomas R. Dew, *Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832*, 1832, and George McDuffie, message to the Legislature of South Carolina, *Journal of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina*, 1835.

GLOSSARY

inevitably – something that will eventually happen

conducive – tending to produce; helpful; favorable

sanction – authoritative permission or approval

servile – submissive; slavish behavior

attributes – resulting from a specified cause

1. According to Thomas Dew, what specifically makes a slave's life in the South so joyful?
2. Why does Dew use family terms when describing slavery? Does he consider slaves to be like family?
3. What does Thomas Dew predict would happen to the slaves if they were set free?
4. Thomas Dew is obviously an educated man. He teaches at a prestigious university. Would you believe what he is telling you about slavery in the South? Explain why or why not.
5. George McDuffie, the South Carolina governor, clearly states that slavery is God's will. What are the two specific examples he gives to support this belief?
6. If you were devoutly religious – you believed the Bible was the word of God – would you disagree with what McDuffie was saying? Explain why or why not.
7. If you were opposed to slavery – you wanted to stop the buying and selling of human beings – what arguments would you use to try to change the minds of men like Thomas Dew and George McDuffie? Explain at least one in a thorough and thoughtful paragraph.

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