Perplexing Patriarchies

Fatherhood Among Black Opponents
and White Defenders of Slavery

by
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Abstract

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Pierre Islam

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Perplexing Patriarchies examines the rhetorical usage (and lived experience) of fatherhood among three African American abolitionists and three of their white proslavery opponents in the United States during the nineteenth century. Both the prominent abolitionists (Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, and Henry Garnet), as well as the prominent proslavery advocates (Henry Hammond, George Fitzhugh, and Richard Dabney), appealed to the popular image of the father, husband, and head of household in order to attack or justify slavery.

How and why could these opposing individuals rely on appeals to the same ideal of fatherhood to come to completely different and opposing conclusions? This book finds the answer by first acknowledging that both the abolitionists and the proslavery men shared similar concerns about the contested status of fatherhood in the nineteenth century—indeed, Northern and Southern men shared these concerns generally. However, due to subtle differences in their starting assumptions, and different choices of what parts of a father's responsibilities to emphasize, the black abolitionists conceived of an ideal father who protected the autonomy of his dependents, while the proslavery men conceived of one whose authority necessitated the subordination of those he protected.

Since these differences arose from choices in starting assumptions and emphases rather than total disagreement on what the role of the father should be, the book concludes that black abolitionists were not radically critiquing the gender conventions of their day, but innovatively working within those conventions to turn them towards social reform. This opens up a new way for historians to consider how oppressed peoples negotiated the intellectual boundaries of the societies which oppressed them: Not necessarily breaking entirely from those boundaries, nor passively accepting them, but ingeniously synthesizing a worldview from within their confines that still allowed for freedom and personal autonomy.

This work is based on the public speeches, books, and articles of the six chosen subjects, as well as their personal correspondence along with what was written about them in contemporary papers and periodicals. These primary sources are analyzed in order to provide a new perspective on gender roles, family life, and American political culture during the nineteenth century.

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Introduction

Fatherhood in Black and White in Nineteenth-Century America

Heading a family in 19th century America was not an easy job for a man, at least according to the most famous black abolitionist of the time, Frederick Douglass. As he admitted to a personal acquaintance, having an ill wife at home revealed how much he relied on her support. "I am sad to say she is by no means well," he told Lydia Dennett in 1857, "she has suffered in every member except one. She still seems able to use with great ease and fluency her powers of speech, and by the time I am at home a week or two longer, I shall have pretty fully learned in how many points there is need of improvement in my temper and disposition as a husband and father, the head of a family!"[1]

While this anecdote (in a personal letter, not for publication) may not seem to have much significance by itself, the phrase Douglass used— "head of a family"—carried a great deal of weight in the historical period in which he lived. Men and women, blacks and whites, Northerners and Southerners all debated each other over what it meant to be the head of a household, who should hold the position, and how the other members of the household should relate to it. As historian Chris Dixon has noted, proslavery authors such as George Fitzhugh believed slavery strengthened the bonds between men and their wives and children, ensuring that most people, black and white alike, could enjoy family life. On the other hand, abolitionists held that slavery had turned the Southern family into a "den of domestic devilishness." They believed slavery was the most visible manifestation of the cruelty and dysfunction present in Southern familial and gender relations, which they contrasted to their more egalitarian family ideals.[2]

It is not surprising, therefore, that black male abolitionists like Douglass often referred to family relations in their public advocacy as well as their private correspondence to raise enthusiasm for the cause of civil rights. But an examination of their use of three particular relations—those of husbands, fathers, and heads of household—may be revealing from a historian's perspective. For instance, over ten years earlier, Douglass had taken an affront against his daughter Rosetta as cause to publicly condemn (in the pages of his paper, *The North Star*) the Rochester parent who had her expelled from her school, using

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[1] Philip S. Foner, ed., *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), Pages 21-22, 46.
[2] Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 21-22.

his status as an aggrieved father to settle a personal quarrel *and* simultaneously assert the rights of African Americans across the nation to a proper education.[3] A fellow black abolitionist, Martin R. Delany, used the image of an enraged head of household dedicated to the protection of his family in order to condemn the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act. "My house is my castle," he declared, "in that castle are none but my wife and my children…if any man approaches that house in search of a slave…if he crosses the threshold of my door, and I do not lay him a lifeless corpse at my feet, I hope the grave may refuse my body a resting-place." Another well-known abolitionist, Henry Highland Garnet, believed that appealing to the desires of fathers to protect their families would resonate with his audience and sway them towards abolitionism. He asked Congress, "Is it right and just that the persons of your wives and children should be at the disposal of others, and be yielded to them for the purpose of pampering their lusts and greed of gain?"[4]

Douglass, Delany, and Garnet deployed these emotionally stirring images on behalf of their race, but their opponents also appealed to the status of the male head of household in order to refute claims of racial equality, and even to assert the beneficence and profitability of slavery as a social system. "Nature impels the father and husband to self-abnegation and self-denial to promote the happiness of wife and children," the prolific Virginian social critic George Fitzhugh wrote in *Cannibals All*, "because his reflected enjoyments will be a thousand times greater than any direct pleasure he can derive by stinting or maltreating them." The same loving relationship between fathers and families was replicated between slave and master, according to Fitzhugh, since "the interests of all the members of a natural family, slaves included, are identical."[5] Here, Fitzhugh portrayed the male head of household as a benevolent, protective figure for his dependents (his wife and children), and extended that beneficence to the master's relationship with his slaves in order to portray slavery as a positive good. This rhetorical strategy marked Fitzhugh as no more unique among proslavery advocates than Douglass was among abolitionists. James Henry Hammond, a senator in Congress, made a similar argument in a letter to an English abolitionist. He claimed that the use of physical punishment to discipline slaves was no different than a father's allowance of the same when a teacher disciplined his children. Following the

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[3] Frederick Douglass, "To H.G. Warner, Esq., Editor of the Rochester Courier," in Philip Foner, ed., *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass, Vol. I: Early Years, 1817-1849* (New York: International Publishers, 1850), 371-373.

[4] Robert S. Levine, ed. *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), 183-184, Henry Highland Garnet, "A Memorial Discourse," in Ofari, *Let Your Motto Be Resistance*, 198.

[5] George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or: Slaves Without Masters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 217.

Civil War, R.L. Dabney defended the slave system in the same way. In *A Defence of Virginia*, he implied that the arguments abolitionists made against slavery would inevitably destroy the family as well: "The same principles have consistently led some abolitionists to assail the parental relation itself. For although none can deny that, in helpless infancy, subjection should be the correlative of protection and maintenance, when once the young citizen has passed from the age of childhood, but what reason can the abolitionist justify his compulsory government by the father?"[6]

Chris Dixon was certainly correct to note how pro-slavery and anti-slavery advocates accused each other of attempting to destroy the basic family unit (that is to say, they cast their opponents in a negative light). However, as the examples given above demonstrate, many in both groups also cast themselves positively as defenders of at least some parts of the healthy family unit (a strong father, husband, and male head of household). It is understandable why both groups would take that approach—the central importance of the adult male in household organization had been taken for granted in American culture since the colonial era.[7] But the historian is still left with several further questions: How could abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates use the same trope to come to and plead for diametrically opposed conclusions on the subject of slavery? Whom were they trying to convince by portraying the household head in the varying ways they did, and how did their audiences react? How did their portrayals change over time, to what extent were these portrayals ideas (consciously grappled with and deployed) or ideologies (reflective of the unquestioned assumptions of their purveyors), and to what extent did the men who deployed these tropes live up to their stated idealizations of fatherhood? Drawing on the rhetoric and personal letters of three exemplars from the black male abolitionist camp (Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and Martin R. Delany) along with three from the white male proslavery camp (George Fitzhugh, Robert Lewis Dabney, and James Henry Hammond), we will seek to answer these questions.

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[6] For some overviews of how Southerners justified slavery on "patriarchal" grounds, extrapolating or comparing the benevolent rule of a father over his family to that of a master over his slaves, see Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 189; Robert Lewis Dabney, *A Defence of Virginia: And Through Her, of the South, in Recent and Pending Contests Against the Sectional Party* (New York: E.J. Hale and Co, 1867), 266. Also see Paul Conner, "Patriarchy: Old World and New" in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1965), 48-62; Michael D. Pierson, "Slavery Cannot be Covered Up with Broadcloth or a Bandana: The Evolution of White Abolitionist Attacks on the 'Patriarchal Institution,'" *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 2005), 383-415.

[7] Dixon, 156-159.

The direct reasons for these divergences are in some ways obvious: The proslavery men flatly denied that black men could be good heads of household (due to racist beliefs about the inherent inferiority of blacks), while the black men understandably claimed the opposite. This allowed the former to argue that slavery maintained the head of household's status since it kept the unworthy from usurping it, while the latter argued slavery was an injustice since it kept worthy black men from attaining it, and they had to go out of their way to show that black men could attain it, drawing from both historical examples and their own lives. There were also, however, subtler differences not widely discussed in the existing historiography; abolitionists tended to portray the head of household as a father and husband who selflessly loved and protected his wife and children from external threats, whereas proslavery men emphasized the duty of a head of household to protect his dependents from themselves.

There are several reasons for this difference. Both the abolitionists and the proslavery men wished to bolster the efforts of their political supporters and convince anyone on the fence about the slavery question in their respective home regions (the North and South). Both sides also wanted to convince their opponents in the other region. However, black male abolitionists had to be very conscious of maintaining support from the women in their movement, while it was not as much of a concern for proslavery advocates. The necessity of maintaining goodwill among a female audience led to the abolitionists embracing a less controlling vision of fatherhood. This decision also arose from a consciously held conviction (an idea) along with an unconscious ideology. The abolitionists consciously believed that family relations should accommodate the active participation of women in public life. The unconscious, unquestioned ideology of the abolitionists entailed that a father could be protective without necessarily being controlling. The conscious convictions and unconscious ideology of proslavery advocates differed on these subjects in subtle ways which led them to opposite conclusions. Southerners linked family health to the unquestioned sovereignty of the male head of household, and this embrace of a rigid domestic hierarchy led them to embrace the rigid, race-based hierarchy of slavery as well.

That is all well and good, but the reader might still ask, "so what?" David Ericson's work can help to explain the importance of this line of historical inquiry. Ericson describes how both abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates shared a common wellspring of ideas (most notably political liberalism) but used them to arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions. As he wrote, "it is always easy to dismiss the antebellum defenders of slavery as racists, which I am very willing to admit they were. It is much more difficult to recognize that

they shared principles that we generally evaluate in positive terms."[8] While Ericson's project differed in focus from this one (concentrating on liberal defenses of private property and self-determination rather than gender specifically), its justification also applies. Comparing the rhetoric of these proslavery and abolitionist men can help us understand how prominent thinkers could agree with their black abolitionist opponents on so much yet still came to the exact opposite conclusions. By extension, it may also help us understand how North and South eventually came to blows over the question of slavery, and further establishes the "civil" nature of the conflict. Americans who were so different in circumstances—black men from the North compared to white men from the South—shared so many of their domestic ideals that they would attack and defend slavery with, at times, very similar language. The fact that they remained on opposite sides, on the other hand, can help demonstrate an important theme in nineteenth-century American intellectual history, namely, how differences in starting assumptions as well as subtler differences in interpretation, emphasis, and trajectory can take a shared ideology in wildly opposite directions.

These six men would have shared not only an ideology but also concerns and anxieties over the role of fatherhood and the structure of family relations within their society. Both of these things had been undergoing great change since the eighteenth century. In the North, the market revolution—the shift from a household economy based on family subsistence to one where men would go out to work for wages by making products or providing services entwined with a global economy—denuded traditional conceptions of a proper family structure. Many Northern fathers found wage work profitable and satisfying, but it could also be much more stressful and psychologically alienating than working from home. The wage laborer could no longer set his own hours nor rely on the efforts of people related to him by blood, but instead had to adapt to the more impersonal environment of the factory and competition with other employees who owed him neither familiar affection nor loyalty.[9]

The ideology of "separate spheres" arose as a comforting antidote to this sort of alienation. The world of work and the domestic sphere were supposed to be wholly divided, so hard-working fathers could retreat from the harsh world of competition to the loving arms of their wives and children, who gave them pure and unconditional respect, love, and devotion. But while this may have been an ideal, it did not reflect reality—as the market revolution progressed, many poor

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[8] David F. Ericson, *The Debate Over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America* (New York University Press, 2005), 3, 13.
[9] Amy Dru Stanley, "Home Life and the Morality of the Market" in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 76-80.

and middle class women were forced out of the peaceful domestic sphere (which was also coded as feminine and subordinate) and into the harsh world of wage labor. Not every husband and father could support his dependents on his wage alone, so many wives and children also had to go out into the world to earn their own incomes as domestic servants and even factory workers themselves.[10] This unnerved many working fathers, as their position as breadwinner was no longer distinctively masculine if their wives and daughters could follow them into the workplace. Over the course of the nineteenth century, then, many men would be eager to find a conception of fatherhood which both ennobled free labor for wages while maintaining a sense of masculinity that did not preclude women from free wage labor as well.

The "market revolution" did not affect Southern fathers in exactly the same ways it did the North. In areas where slave labor remained crucial to the economy, the family remained central to production, both for yeomen (whether or not they owned slaves) and large plantation owners. Thus, Southern fathers, who still worked largely within their homes alongside their families, did not experience the same sort of physical alienation that Northern ones did.[11] Their changing place in the larger economy as well as the work they did, however, meant their authority began to shift and change in similar ways. Middle and upper-class southerners, especially slaveholders, felt these changes particularly keenly.

Many Southern communities found themselves entangled in a global economy as the market revolution swept over them. In the revolution's early years, itinerant merchants bought cotton from farmers for sale on global markets, and over the course of the nineteenth century, they were replaced by local stores which provided equipment and other necessities in return for staple crops to sell later. But while this brought prosperity to both merchants and farmers, it also brought instability. Many young Southern men, attracted by the prospect of making names for themselves as owners of their own businesses or farms, began to leave their parents' homesteads instead of staying with them and working under them.[12] While many Southern fathers were pleased to see their sons become independent and self-sufficient, at the same time, they also felt a deep anxiety over this change. The father could no longer command authority over his adult sons if they were no longer under his roof. He could not make decisions on behalf of a young man who not only wanted to make his own choices, but was expected to under the cultural norms of

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[10] Ibid, 80-90.
[11] Michael E. Price, *Stories With a Moral: Literature and Society in Nineteenth-Century Georgia* (University of Georgia Press, 2000), 112-114.
[12] James Oakes, *The Ruling Race* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 93-95, 96-109, 117-122.

independence inculcated by a growing market society. To assuage their psyches and resolve these tensions, Southern men would want reassurance in the form of both an ideology and publicly-agreed-upon guidelines which would give them a sense of remaining patriarchs in some way.

Even as their patriarchal authority was shifting, if not entirely eroding, nineteenth-century Southern fathers still felt a great deal of patriarchal responsibility. Many of those concerns involved religion and personal character. Just as the market revolution changed their economic lives, a wave of Christian fervor changed their spiritual ones. After the American Revolution, a series of religious revivals spread through the South and left an enduring impact on the mentality of the middle and upper classes, once again, particularly on slaveholders.[13] Throughout the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, transportation was too slow and populations too dispersed for clergymen to maintain strong congregations in the South. The evangelical camp meeting, however, could be held for a variable period of time to suit local needs (from days to weeks) while still allowing congregants to hear preaching and sermons while building a sense of community among them. This fulfilled a vital need among rural Southerners from all economic classes, as rural life entailed a great deal of isolation and loneliness, given the distances that separated even close neighbors.[14]

Thus, it is easy to see that conditions were ripe for the spread of an evangelical Christianity based around the camp revival, and it is unsurprising that such a faith took deep roots in Southern hearts during this time. However, that faith also raised many tensions in Southern minds, particularly those of fathers who owned slaves. While evangelical Christianity provided the fellowship they desperately needed, it also seemed at odds with the materialism and concern for profit that characterized a plantation economy based on slavery. Indeed, the very act of holding slaves would be cruel, and therefore un-Christian, unless slavery was conceived of in different terms. As a result of these tensions, Southern fathers became particularly concerned about the moral development of their children. Over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, many plantation masters sent warnings to their sons about the dangers of materialism and the necessity of piety. The correspondence of many young men described the great deal of pressure their fathers put on them to live moral Christian lives, even after they left the household.[15] Given these economic and religious changes, Southerners who were or aspired to be fathers would want a vision of that role which maintained an air of

[13] Ibid, 96-100.
[14] Ibid., 100-105.
[15] Ibid., 98-99.

authority while at the same time maintaining a sense of morality uncorrupted by materialism and profit-seeking.

The white Southern father, therefore, was faced with a set of tensions his Northern counterpart could understand. Though the market revolution impacted both differently, both wanted to create a vision of fatherhood that would remain both relevant and coherent in the face of a rapidly changing world. This makes it easy to see why both Northerners and Southerners would have used fatherhood in their pro and anti-slavery rhetoric: The issue cut to the heart of their patriarchal anxieties. They also wanted to create a conception of their ideal societies—free and slave—that would assuage the anxieties they felt about fatherhood.

Dabney, Hammond, Fitzhugh, Delany, Douglass, and Garnet can collectively provide a clear and informative glimpse into such anxieties for a variety of reasons. First is their very public visibility. In the public sphere, not all voices are equal—some are more influential or at least louder than others. Thus, there are several aspects of public rhetoric which may be best understood through focusing on famous public intellectuals as opposed to lesser known individuals. In the public arena, not every member of a movement wrote or spoke as much, or levied as much influence; some in particular would always stand out for the size of their audience and influence on that audience. And to both supportive and hostile members of that audience, it seems reasonable to assume the abolitionist and proslavery causes would be more readily associated with their more famous advocates than anyone else. All of these figures mattered to nineteenth-century discourse in different but significant ways. Frederick Douglass was called the "Lion of Anacostia" and the most famous black intellectual in America. Henry Highland Garnet became foreign minister to Liberia after the Civil War. Martin R. Delany edited a newspaper and was one of the first three black men ever admitted to Harvard's medical school. Given their successes and public prominence, these three men would symbolize the cause of abolitionism in the public imagination in ways other abolitionists did not.

The same could be said of James Henry Hammond, George Fitzhugh, and R.L. Dabney. Any one of these men would still command interest today for their outsized roles in the nation's public life—Hammond was very famous for his "Mudsill Speech" before the Senate, Fitzhugh's arguments influenced Justice Taney in the Dred Scott Decision, and Dabney was one of the most influential figures in the history of Presbyterianism in America. However, examining how these "symbolic" figures conceived of fatherhood would bring into focus a different but equally important issue than a more general comparison of abolition and proslavery men: What sort of portrayals and utilizations of fatherhood would most resonate with a wide public audience?

Additionally, an analysis centered on these six very public figures could also take advantage of the diversity of views they represented in their respective proslavery and abolitionist movements. There were certainly other prominent, highly visible, and arguably symbolic public intellectuals I could have chosen for either side—Alexander Crummell, James McCune Smith, or Thornton Stringfellow to name a few.[16] Even so, several aspects of the public work and life histories of my choices mean they would be particularly helpful in nuancing an analysis of how symbolic public figures portrayed an ideal relationship between the head of household and his dependents. Any such study would do well to look at Frederick Douglass since he was the most recognizable and respected black abolitionist man of the time period. However, Henry Highland Garnet and Martin Delany, while not as famous as Douglass advocated politics subtly different than his, though all shared a firm belief in abolition. Henry Highland Garnet justified the use of violence by slaves, which Douglass did not accept (before the 1850s). Delany, on the other hand, focused more on emigration and separation from a racist society than Douglass did, and came into conflict with both Douglass and Garnet on several occasions regarding interracial cooperation.[17] Given this diversity of opinion, similarities in the portrayal of fatherhood among these men would prove that such ideals had an appeal to abolitionists that was compelling enough to cross over even other political lines and dissensions.

Similar concerns informed the choices of Hammond, Dabney, and Fitzhugh as proslavery representatives. As a politician and author of one of the most famous proslavery speeches delivered to Congress, Hammond would make an ideal choice of prominent public figure to discuss. Aside from being notable as someone whom the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* has called the "most eloquent" opponent of abolitionism, Hammond's conscious attempts to frame himself as a public intellectual make the ways he used (or didn't use) fatherhood in his rhetoric an intriguing point of comparison.[18] Fitzhugh and

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[16] Alexander Crummell was a prominent black Episcopalian and a leading proponent of emigration to Liberia, James McCune Smith was the first African American to open a pharmacy and also a prominent abolitionist, and Stringfellow was a Baptist minister who wrote many influential defenses of slavery as a Biblical institution. See Ofari, 5, 11, Faust, *The Ideology of Slavery*, 137-139.

[17] Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1997), 60; Ofari, 99-100 (Garnet very sharply insulted Delany in 1860, mocking him for criticizing a white man, James Redpath, for supporting African emigration).

[18] Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 1-6; "James Henry Hammond's Defense of Slavery," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 17 (Autumn, 1997), 55; "The Abolitionists' Most Formidable Opponent," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 31 (Spring, 2001), 52-53; Jon L. Wakelyn, "The Changing Loyalties of James Henry Hammond: A Reconsideration," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Jan. 1974), 1-13.

Dabney were also very well known (the former being one of the most prolific contributors to *Debow's Review,* the latter very famous in the Presbyterian church for his theological writings), but their politics and life histories differ from Hammond's in ways that might render an analysis of them more telling. Fitzhugh's defense of slavery differed sharply from Hammond's in that he extended it to whites as well, while Dabney, being a clergyman, emphasized religion in his arguments to a greater degree than Hammond did.[19] In short, Garnet, Delany, and Douglass, along with Hammond, Dabney, and Fitzhugh, fulfill the criteria of *both* being very well known, public, and thus symbolic of their causes (if not necessarily representative) *and* holding a sufficiently diverse range of opinions to make similarities and differences in their portrayals of fatherhood meaningful. While nothing directly connects these six men—they did not engage in a debate all together or write about one another extensively—as the rest of this book will prove, they all reacted to the changes occurring in America's political landscape in telling and related ways.

A brief summary of the historiography surrounding these questions will further explain the importance of this project to American history as a whole and how it contributes to the existing scholarship. Scholars have also explored the relationship between gender, family life, and abolitionism since the early 1970s. In 1973, Ronald Walters located the growing fervor of abolitionism after 1830 in "changing, culturally determined attitudes about sex…which merged with other assumptions to make conditions in the South appear uncomfortably applicable to the North." Carol Lasser and Michael Pierson came to similar conclusions in their own studies.[20] All three of these scholars noted how women's indignation was a powerful weapon against slavery, and fittingly, the 1990s and 2000s saw a spate of thoughtful books and articles published on black and white women abolitionists. Shirley J. Yee's 1992 dissertation asserted that black women collectively provided a crucial base of support for the movement; Julie Jeffreys extended this argument in her 2010 work through a close reading of many abolitionist letters and publications, concluding that the antislavery would have been much more marginal than it was without the involvement of black and white wom-

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[19] Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 262. Hammond respected Christianity and appealed to it publicly, but according to Faust, he did not genuinely believe in it. Also see Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery*, 17-19 for an explanation of how extreme Fitzhugh's encouragement of slavery for whites was seen by other proslavery thinkers.

[20] Ronald Walters, "The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1973), 178-201; Lasser, 83-114; Michael D. Pierson, 383-415. Also see Jaqueline Jones, "Women Who Were More Than Men: Sex and Status in Freedmen's Teaching," *History of Education Quarterly,* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 1979), 47-59 for a description of how emancipation influenced gender roles during Reconstruction.

en.[21] Kristin Hoganson, Bruce Dorsey, and Marc M. Arkin have explored how Garrisonian abolitionists and advocates of colonization alike tailored their rhetoric to acknowledge the women in their ranks.[22] This book will expand on the work they have started, displaying how women levied a distinct influence on black male abolitionists and constituted a force they consciously reckoned with in constructing their rhetoric and political advocacy.

The historiography surrounding the proslavery argument has also expanded robustly since the 1990s, and this work builds on it. The most comprehensive overview published in the late 80s is Larry Tise's *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840*, which concluded that proslavery's American form was a "conservative" ideology gestated in the North and brought over to the South as part of a counter-revolutionary tradition sweeping across the country as a whole.[23] From the 1990s to the 2000s, scholars would continue this process of contextualization, extending it to areas such as religious history and trans-Atlantic history. Charles F. Iron's 2008 monograph, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*, postulated that a religious defense of Southern slavery arose not in isolation but as a response to African American evangelicals.[24] Daniel Kilbride asserted that the proslavery argument grew alongside and drew on other 19th century philosophical movements such as utilitarianism, and Edward Rugemer has recently found that the British abolition of slavery in the West Indies was a crucial turning point in the portrayal of slavery as a humane, positive good by its defenders.[25] This line of thought represents one of this project's main arguments. By exploring the similarities between proslavery and abolitionist portrayals of fatherhood, this book will demonstrate another way in

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[21] Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study In Activism, 1828-1860* (University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 1-20; also see Jean Fagin Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Cornell University Press, 1994), 119-139; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army of Abolitionism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 13-52.

[22] Kristin Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Dec., 1993), 558-595; Bruce Dorsey, "A Gendered History of African Colonization in the Antebellum United States," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Autumn, 2000), 77-103; Marc M. Arkin, "The Federalist Trope: Power and Passion in Abolitionist Rhetoric," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (Jun., 2001), 75-98.

[23] Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 1-20, 40-60, 90-120, 350-360.

[24] Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2008), 3-7.

[25] Daniel Kilbride, "Slavery and Utilitarianism: Thomas Cooper and the Mind of the Old South," The Journal of Southern History, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Aug 1993), 469-486; Edward B. Rugemer, "The Southern Response to British Abolitionism: The Maturity of Proslavery Apologetics," The Journal of Southern History, Vol. 70, No. 2 (May 2004), 221-248. Also see John David Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography*, 1865-1918 (Southern Illinois University Press, 2008) for an exploration of how proslavery apologetics persisted beyond the end of the Civil War.

which both pro- and anti-slavery men shared a social and intellectual world and were engaged with larger currents of their culture.

As implied by the historiography given above, one of the benefits of this work will be opening new avenues of questioning. Much like David Ericson's comparative analysis of liberalism in pro- and anti-slavery rhetoric inspired this project's comparative analysis of fathers, husbands, and heads of household in the same, perhaps future historians can take this approach to examine the other ways anti- and pro-slavery thinkers drew upon a shared well of ideas. Henry Highland Garnet and Martin Delany were very concerned with education as a means of advancement for their downtrodden race; James Henry Hammond and George Fitzhugh were also concerned with the same as a means of advancing their beloved South. This book will hopefully have opened up methodological pathways for any future historian wishing to explore those questions to use.

An example of this useful methodological approach can be seen in this book's first two chapters, **"**Protecting the Family Altar" and "A Putrid Mass." These chapters highlight and explore specific instances where the chosen subjects describe fathers, husbands, and heads of household in their public speeches and writings, with particular emphasis on the years around the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott decision. They methodically compare such descriptions to explain how and why the use of fatherhood in the rhetoric of antislavery and proslavery advocates differed and what that meant for their political dispute. After explaining what the existing historiography has established around proslavery and antislavery conceptions of gender roles and proper domestic order, the chapters will advance a novel argument: At least in regards to fatherhood, black abolitionists were not necessarily "radical," in the sense of completely overturning established 19th century gender conventions. Rather, they innovatively and ingeniously used conventional ideas revolving around fatherhood to advance a vision of family relations that was comparatively egalitarian and amenable to the struggle for racial equality, but also conventionally and recognizably masculine at the same time. They emphasized a father's prerogative to protect and guide his wife and children, but not so much to control them. Chapter 1 explores how these six men believed gender conventions should be expressed in the home, and Chapter 2 explores how they related these gender conventions to the health of society as a whole.

The nature of those gender conventions is explored in Chapter 3: "Pleading the Cause." This chapter explores the many responses the six subjects of this study received for their fatherhood-oriented rhetoric. Reviews and reactions to their speeches and writings will be examined, highlighting instances where the reviewers noted the way these men portrayed fatherhood. The conclusion is that Northern and Southern audiences also shared a common set of intel-

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