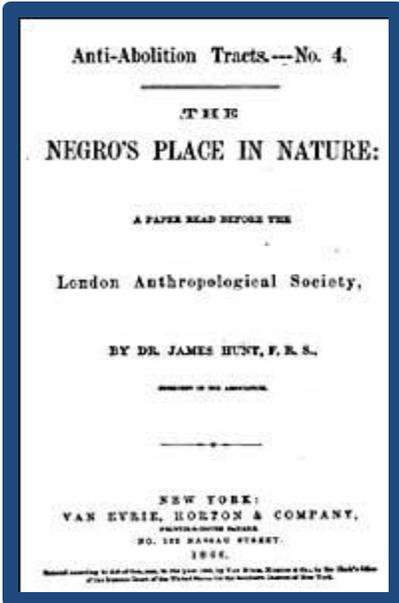


# The Southern Argument for Slavery

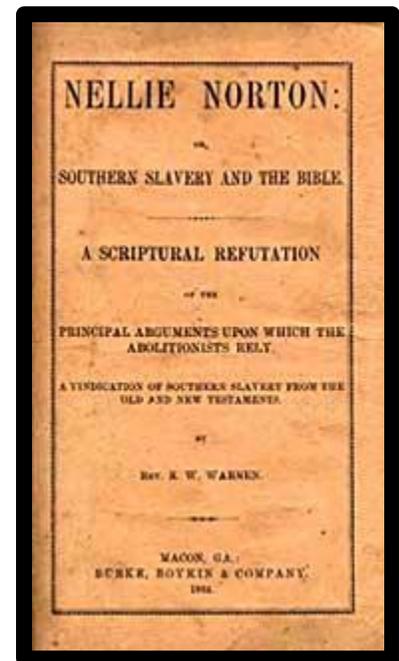
Those who defended slavery rose to the challenge set forth by Abolitionists. The defenders of slavery included economics, history, religion, legality, social good, and even humanitarianism, to further their arguments. When a society forms around any institution, as the South did around slavery, formulating a set of arguments to support it is expected. The Southerners held ever firmer to their arguments as the political tensions in the country drew us ever closer to the Civil War. Various arguments made in defense of slavery are listed below.

1. A sudden end to the slave economy would have had a profound and killing economic impact in the South where reliance on slave labor was the foundation of their economy. The cotton economy would collapse. The tobacco crop would dry in the fields. Rice would cease being profitable.



2. If all the slaves were freed, there would be widespread unemployment and chaos. This would lead to uprisings, bloodshed, and anarchy. They pointed to the mob's "rule of terror" during the French Revolution and argued for the continuation of the status quo, which was providing for affluence and stability for the slaveholding class and for all free people who enjoyed the bounty of the slave society.
3. African Americans were biologically inferior to their masters. During the 1800s, this argument was taken quite seriously, even in scientific circles.
4. Slavery had existed throughout history and was the natural state of mankind. The Greeks had slaves, the Romans had slaves, and the English had slavery until very recently.
5. In the Bible, Abraham had slaves. In the Ten Commandments, it says "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, or his manservant, or his maidservant." In the New Testament, Paul returned a runaway slave, Philemon, to his master, and, although slavery was widespread throughout the Roman world, Jesus never spoke out against it.

6. The court system, the Dred Scott Decision, ruled that all blacks — not just slaves — had no legal standing— they were property, and the Constitution protected slave-holders' rights to their property.
7. The institution was divine, and that it brought Christianity to the heathen from across the ocean. Slavery was, according to this argument, a good thing for the enslaved. John C. Calhoun said, "Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually."
8. By comparison with the poor of Europe and the workers in the Northern states, that slaves were better cared for. They said that their owners would protect and assist them when they were sick and aged, unlike those who, once fired from their work, were left to fend helplessly for themselves.



9. The violence of Nat Turner's 1831 slave revolt frightened many southern slaveholders. Such unrest was used by many as a reason to continue slavery.