

slaves often ran away, committed sabotage, and plotted revolts, and on one occasion a slave, Nat Turner, led a bloody general insurrection against the masters.

Slavery's moral and social evil did not go unremarked in the colonial period. The Quakers, for example, insisted that slavery violated both human dignity and divine law. Not until the Revolution, however, did most Americans become sensitive to the discrepancy between slavery and their professed ideals as embodied in the Declaration of Independence. All the states north of Delaware put the institution on the road to extinction, slavery was banned from the Old Northwest, and the Constitutional Convention opened the way for abolition of the slave trade after 1808. Even in the upper South, where the tobacco economy was languishing, liberal leaders hoped that the gradual operation of economic forces would eventually permit the abolition of slavery. Instead, the developing cotton market revived plantation agriculture. Slaves proved so productive in Southern cotton fields that slaveowners shut their ears to any criticism of the institution until the Civil War brought its demise.

Meanwhile antislavery sentiment was growing in the North. Even here racist assumptions caused free Negroes to be segregated and discriminated against, but after 1830 a vocal abolitionist movement had increasing effect. The efforts of the abolitionists, who included a substantial body of Northern free Negroes, deserve serious and sympathetic exposition in textbooks. They are often derided for their occasional extravagance and for their internal disagreements, yet the fact is that they performed an immense service in educating Americans to the moral evils of slavery.

Abolitionists are frequently blamed for the Civil War by people who also insist that slavery had nothing to do with the coming of the war, that indeed the South fought to preserve state rights. Most scholars today agree, however, that slavery, and especially the issue of extending slavery into the territories, was fundamental. Certainly a careful appraisal of the slavery issue in national politics should be included in any textbook covering this period.

When the Civil War came, some 200,000 Negroes participated in the fighting that resulted in their formal emancipation. Following the war they also took an important part in the struggle over Southern Reconstruction, which determined whether their emancipation was to be nominal or full. Reconstruction is a controversial issue in American history. The best scholarship today portrays sympathetically the radical Republicans in Congress, who opposed Lincoln's and later Johnson's plans for bringing the Southern states back into the Union as quickly and painlessly as possible under conservative white leadership. The radicals, this scholarship holds, operated from mixed motives: to be sure they were interested in maintaining their political advantage, but they also wished to reform the structure of Southern life. They especially wanted to help the Negro make himself a full partner in a free society.