

VIRGINIA AND THE ORIGIN OF AN AMERICAN PARADOX.

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Résumé

Dans l'histoire des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, aucune institution n'est plus éloignée des principes fondateurs de la nation Américaine que l'esclavage des Noirs. L'incohérence apparente ou l'épineuse hypocrisie des maîtres d'esclaves qui consacrent leur vie à défendre la liberté et l'égalité demeure le point focal du paradoxe américain. L'objectif visé par le présent article est de pouvoir donner une explication au fait que les leaders de la révolution américaine se sont battus pour la liberté et la dignité humaines et ont pu au même moment développer et maintenir un système de servitude à l'antipode des mêmes valeurs. Basée sur l'analyse du contenu comme approche scientifique, cette étude empirique s'évertue d'analyser deux siècles de contradictions pour le maintien et le respect des principes de la déclaration d'indépendance avec une attention particulière sur la Virginie : le point d'ancrage de cette ambiguïté.

Mots clés : principes – paradoxe – liberté humaine – servitude – ambiguïtés.

Abstract

No institution, in the history of the United States of America is more contradictory to the founding principles of the American republic than the institution of Negro slavery. The seeming inconsistency or a far-fetched hypocrisy of slaveholders devoting themselves to freedom and equality remains the central paradox of America. Providing an explanation of how people could have developed the dedication to human liberty and dignity exhibited by the leaders of the American Revolution and at the same time have developed and maintained a system of labor and bondage is the object of this research work. Basing on content analysis as a scientific guide, this empirical study projects to analyze two centuries of contradictions related

to the implementation of the Declaration principles with a special emphasis on Virginia: the focus-point of the ambiguity in question.

Key words: *principles – paradox – human liberty – serfdom – ambiguities.*

Introduction

From its very beginnings, the New World (America), had definitely been a precious magnet to the people of the whole earth. Consequently, they had been drawn to its shores from anywhere and everywhere, from far and near, from hot places to cold places, from mountains and plains, surely from desert and quite fertile fields... On the one hand, America welcomed peoples of diverse origins; on the other hand, there was a melting of a variety of religious faiths and cultural backgrounds regarding those peoples. As matter of fact, all of them discovered parts of America, explored them at length, raised their country's flags, claimed the lands, developed activities depending on each one's economic capacity. It was henceforth widely felt that European expansion was quite well the driving force that first opened up the frontier land called America.

For over two hundred years, the earlier immigrants poured into the New World, most of them were meant to develop lucrative activities and elsewhere based on the sale of human beings. Gottlieb Mittelberger, an organist while describing his crossing the Atlantic Ocean in the Queen Mary or the Queen Elizabeth streamships says the following:

when the ships have landed at Virginia after their long voyage no one is permitted to leave them except those who pay for their passage or can give good security; ...till they are purchased, and are released from the ships by the purchasers. The sick always fare.... of the city for 2 and 3 weeks and

frequently die,..., might recover.....The sale of human beings in the market on board the ship is carried on thus: Everyday Englishmen, Dutchmen ,and high German people come from the city and, it happens that...bind themselves in writing to serve 3, 4, 5 or 6 years for the amount due by them varies according to their age and strength. But very young people, from 10 to 15 years must serve until they are 21 years old¹.

Seeds of disparities were then sown in lands of the New World. Such a kind of things gave birth to certain kinds of inequalities that reigned over ages in a soil belonging to everyone who succeeded in setting foot safely. Instead, the case of America is quite particular with a special character of putting coins and voices in unison or making hay at the very heart of a winter time. An insight into the following statements, put forward by two well-informed American historians, may help grasp in advance a clearly-cut comprehension of the two-folded character of that land of liberty.

...the principles upon which American greatness is founded [are] - reverence for individual liberties and for toleration, unswerving belief in government by consent of the governed, concern with equal opportunity for all, and advocacy of moral and humane aspirations and objectives in our dealings with other nations.

Richard B. Morris

Basic Documents in American History (1956)

America is home to people of almost every race, religion and nationality. Some, like the Native Americans and Inuit, have been here for thousands of years. Others, who arrived later, came in the

¹ Leo Huberman, *We The People*, (Haper – Brothers publishers , New York, 1940) p5

hope of finding riches, adventure, and a new life. And some, fleeing war, famine, and persecution, sought only safety and a chance to survive. African-Americans alone were brought here unwillingly, stolen from their homes and forced to live as slaves.

Susan Altman

*Extraordinary African-Americans: From Colonial
to
Contemporary Times (2001)*

These two perceptibly contradictory quotations are the very epitome of the paradox in the

History of the United States of America: a land of the free and the unfree, a land of freedom and slavery. That federal Republic exuded high hopes with regard to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In line with this, President Abraham Lincoln, while reaffirming faith in the Almighty God as creator of humankind, reminded the nation of the great premises contained in the Declaration of Independence when he said, “ We hold these truths to be self-evident: that **all men** are created **equal**; that they are endowed by their creator with certain **unalienable Rights**; that among these are **Life, Liberty** and the pursuit of **Happiness**”². Not only were greatest figures, including some presidents, slaveholders, but also these people tried to justify that particular context of both slaveholders and freedom fighters: a nonpareil contradiction and a grotesque paradox! Shedding more light on the impossible act, Addison Gayle, Jr distressingly dug up this outrageous contradiction in the following words:

² *An Outline of American History, United States Information Agency, Introducing Paragraph of the American Declaration of Independence, 4th July, 1776.*

when “the dark wings of slavery” settled over America, men, women, and children were treated like animals. Families were broken up – mothers were taken away from children; husbands were taken away from wives. People were forced to work long hours under the hot sun picking cotton. Young black children grew up under the fear of the overseer’s whip. The Afro-Americans lived under oppression from sunup to sundown. (Gayle Jr.Ed.1971)

This facet of real injustice or a far-fetched contradiction is with no doubt the main purpose of the present research work. “The genial light of liberty, which has shone with unrivalled luster on the former, has yielded no comfort to the latter, but to the limit has proved a pillar of darkness, while it has conducted the former to the most enviable state of human existence”³. In addressing slavery atrocities related to the American history and the holocaust of genocide and terror that have been perpetrated by the white world in the name of democracy, Christianity and white supremacy, a white female writer, Penny Hess, former Chairwoman of the African People’s Solidarity Committee (APSC), aptly makes the following point:

According to the general worldview that most of us grew up with, we – the white people – are ordained to abide on tree-lined streets in our peaceful houses with our cars, dogs appropriate numbers of children, with our vacations, credit cards and our assumption that this good life is somehow something we deserve or earned. We choose to believe that unconnected to us, African people are forever trapped in grim, roach and rat-infested housing projects, always being brutalized by

³ Maulana Karenga, (1993) 2nd Edition, *Introduction to Black Studies*, University of Sankoe Press, Los Angeles.

police, hauled off to jail, and dying at untimely rates.

(Hess,1991:p.1)

The appraisal of this obligation to demonstrate the false or lost democracy in America, the striking incompatibility of a state of slavery (mostly negro slavery) with the principles of the American constitution remain the standpoint of this research paper. This empirical study is specifically based on historiographies and evidence to prove the American paradox in question.

1. About the Origin of the American Paradox: First Premises of Ambiguities

1.1 Race, the Institution of slavery and the Making of the American Character.

According to historian Audrey Smedley and likewise to anthropologists in general, contemporary intellectuals agree that “Race” was in fact a recent invention and even added that it was essentially a folk idea, not a product of scientific research and discovery. Race was institutionalized at the beginning of the 18th century as a worldwide issue, a set of culturally created attitudes and beliefs about human group differences⁴. In his book entitled *Capitalism and Slavery*, written in 1944, Eric William states that slavery was not caused by racism but racism was the direct consequence of slavery and mainly African slavery. This idea was backed up by the often-repeated position of the Catholic priest Bartolomes de Las Casas’s petition from Hispaniola, that permission be granted to bring Africans⁵. Under this thesis defended by Eric Williams,

⁴ Molefi K. Asante. “ *The Ideology of Racial Hierarchy and The construction of the European Slave Trade*” International Conference sponsored by UNE SCO, Lisbon ,Portugal, December 1998.

⁵ Ibid

the economic comprehension of the issue is clear, coupled with a mercantilist endeavour.

While Eric William held the position that slavery was not born from racism but that racism was the consequence of slavery, Winthrop Jordan contended that one should not argue whether slavery caused racism or vice versa⁶. According to him, they seem to have generated each other, hustling the African continent toward degradation. In his book entitled *White Over Black*, he put forward a thorough expression of dual generation explanations about the concern of slavery and race. He viewed it under the range of social-economic order since he agreed that there was an economic idea involved in the ideology behind slavery but at the same time the societies from which the impetus for enslavement derived, already had in them certain racist ideas that could be developed with reference to ideological foundations and mainly by the practice of slavery. As a conclusion, he stipulated when taking into account the case of Africa that the enslavement of Africans and other forms of debasement had coincided in the English colonies of Virginia and Maryland with the negative assessments of the character of Africans: perpetual service, the core enslavement⁷.

1-2 Knowing more about the American Character.

Before we present you the matter of fact, it is fit to offer to your view The stage whereon they were acted, for as Geography without History Seemeth a cankase without motion, so History without Geography Wandereth as a Vagrant without a certain habitation.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

(John Smith – The Generall Historie of Virginia,
New England, And the Summer Isles London,
1624)⁸

The American natural landscapes and geography impact in many about the whole history of America.. It has been said that America is a nation with an abundance of geography but a shortage of history and there is some truth in both statements since people had occupied the land for as long as history could recall and as much long as it is built upon the great importance granted to the land in those vast territories of the Americas. Americans have reshaped the face of their land, the people themselves have been shaped and reshaped by constant intimate encounters with that land. The target to reach under this chapter is to know who an American is, his or her social character. This could help us apprehend a clear-cut understanding about their background in order to explicitly shed light on the binaries we constantly remark throughout their attitudes which surely stem from the period of early Virginia. Whether viewed through the metaphor of the melting pot or, more fashionable today, through ethnic pluralism, America has deeply assimilated and developed an extraordinary variety of peoples coming from everywhere. This constitutes a key point in trying to understand the origins of the American paradoxes or inconsistencies from the colonial period, through the revolutionary times to the modern ones. – Struggling to define the essence of the new land at the time of the American revolution, the French immigrant J. Hector St John (Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur) poses the classic question of American nationality in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782):

⁸ Luther S. Luedthe, (1987), *Making America : The Society and Culture of the United States*, United Information Agency, Washington, DC.pg43

What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendent of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grand-father was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and prosperity will one day cause great changes in the world.

The proof that a unifying framework of ideas and values had created a distinctive American people helped comprehend the whole of American history and thus illuminated the past as well as the present to see Americans as power usurpers and freedom fighters. George Santayana and Erick H. Erickson stipulates the following:

I speak of the American in the singular, as if there were not millions of them, North and South, East and West, of both sexes of all ages, and of various races, professions, and religions. Of course the one American I speak of is mythical; but to speak in parables is inevitable in such a subject, and it is perhaps as well to do so frankly...As it happens, the symbolic Americans can be made largely adequate to the facts; because, if there are Immense differences between individual Americans....yet there is a great uniformity in their environment, customs, temper, and thoughts. They have all been uprooted from their several soils and ancestries and plunged together into one vortex, whirling irresistibly in a space otherwise quite

empty. To be an American is of itself almost a moral condition, an education, and a career.

- **George Santayana**, *Character and opinion in the United States*.⁹

It is commonplace to state that whatever one may come to consider a truly American trait can be shown to have its equally characteristic opposite. This one suspects, is true of all “national characters”, or (as I would prefer to call them) national identities – so true, in fact, that one may begin rather end with the propositions that a nation’s identity is derived from the ways in which history has, as it were, counterpointed certain opposite personalities, the way in which it lifts this counterpoint to a unique style of civilization, or lets it dis- integrate into mere contradiction.

-**Erick H. Erickson** - *Childhood and Society*.¹⁰

In one sense, approaching the notion of American social character leads straight away to grasp its equally characteristic opposite. The American societies block together with full awareness of their inner and inseparable traits of opposition or differentiations. The American paradox inevitably stems from the forging of the American character throughout the melting-pot that shaped all the ingathered individuals and societies.

⁹ Ibid, p7

¹⁰ Ibid, p7

2. Colonial Virginia: Birth-place of the American marriage of Slavery and Freedom

2.1.Puritanism: the experience of purity and non-purity.

2.2.1-Between theology and religion

Puritanism was a religious reform movement which arose within the church of England in the late sixteenth century. Under siege from church and crown, the movement sent a remarkable offshoot in the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century to the northern English, colonies in the New World. It gave birth to a migration that curiously laid the foundation for the religious, intellectual and social order of New England. It was in this respect that some conceptual dislocations could be noted, breaching out puritan regulations and by the same token preventing their hopes from being adequately brought to fruition. As a way of being in the world and a style of response to lived experience, Puritanism was not only a historically specific phenomenon in relation with the founding of New England. Yet, parts of the indictment certainly are true and irrefutable, and Puritanism as a religious attitude has probably passed for good let alone the very great contributions of the Puritans to the life of England and America in particular. In line with this, Historian Charles Lloyd Cohen affirms the following:

A further barrier to a correct appraisal of the contribution of Puritanism to the shaping of modern Europe and America is the enormous complexity of the political repercussions of Protestantism. Especially was this the case in England, where from the time of Henry VIII (1491-1547) until the Bloodless of the Commonwealth [1642-1660] under Oliver Cromwell) the reigning King or queen was also supreme head of the Church. Thus, any dissent.... and was punishable in extreme cases death. But

whether in England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, or the Scandinavian countries, the religious ferment of the Reformation rocked Thrones and shaped the policies of Kings, Princes, and men in high places.¹¹

There is in fact nothing new under those religions and moral obligations puritans advanced to make a difference between them and others. Religion has been early on in the American history, a subject of great concern, having been a focus-point of identification or an object of propaganda while holding an impressive part in Americans' life. Yet, whether theologian or religious initiative or approach, the main focus of Puritanism didn't eject any new religious notion except from what others witnessed in the past. Charles Lloyd Cohen depicts that historical context as follows:

The necessity for the work of the theologians arose early in the history of primitive Christianity. As the generation that had known Jesus as a man died out, it became increasingly difficult for second and third generation Christians to maintain the feeling of intimate awareness of God that had characterized the first. Also, the problem of reconciling the Jesus of history with the Jesus, the son of God, came to occupy, Christianity, which had its origins in Judaism, came into a world ridden by innumerable cults and philosophies, particularly those of Greece and Persia, and there was a constant need for clarification and decisions as to what elements from other systems should be incorporated into the new religion.¹²

¹¹ Charles Lloyd Cohen (1896), "Covenant Psychology" in *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (Oxford and New York), P80

¹² Ibid, p91

A close sight to the sequence of events leading up to the appearance of Puritanism offers ample proof that a religious change of some sort was obvious and wasn't born out of its own. All this added to the free-thinking tendencies among university scholars pushed up the move toward new vision rather social, intellectual, economic or religious.

2.2.2 From attempts of purification to the gradual fading of the Puritan Movement.

With regard to a historical background, the term “puritan” first began as a taunt insult to traditional Anglicans to those among them who overtly criticized or wished to “purify” the church of England¹³. In fact, “puritan” originally refers to two distinct groups: “separating” Puritans such as the Plymouth colonists who believed that the church of England was corrupt and that real Christians must separate themselves from it, and non-separating Puritans, such as the colonists who settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony who believed in deep reform but not separation. Yet, at the beginning all puritans were strictly required to attend church but as time went on, they began to expand as diversity in viewpoints expanded as well. As a result, some important events such as the Halfway Covenant and the Great Awakening broke out respectively in 1662 and 1734. While the first stipulated that a person could be baptized and be a part of the church while still not having a conversion, the second emphasized a personal individual repentance and minimized the importance on the relation of religion to the community.¹⁴

The society the Puritans built had a profound effect on the history of the United States. Hopes were not then brought to fruition as John Winthrop on his way to New England with

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Perry Miller (1956), ‘*The Marrow of Puritan Divinity*’ in *Errand into the Wilderness*. (Cambridge: Harvard) p48-49

thousands other Puritans in 1630 voiced the part: “The eyes of all peoples are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and byword throughout the world...”¹⁵. From the full story of the early colonization of New England to the progressive fading of Puritanism, it is quite necessary to present certain facts about Puritanism so as to have a good grasp of the hypocritical attitudes developed by those who are supposed to purify others. The following statement sheds more light on such an aspect:

In the first place, the Puritans who formed in 1628 the enterprise known as the Massachussets Bay Colony, and who came to the New World for economic as well as religious reasons, were still members of the Anglican Church. Although desirous of reform, and in deep disapproval of the remnants of “Poperty” in the Established Church, they still had hopes of effecting their purification from within. They, after leader Robert Browne (1550-1633), were irresponsible enthousiasts, and only bringing Discredit on the reform movement as a whole.¹⁶

Throughout the following lines, it can easily be seen how any resistance to the Puritan orthodoxy was mercilessly punished, serving as proof of intolerance. Called before the General Court in July, 1635, *Roger Williams* opinions were censured as “erroneous and dangerous”, and he was condemned to banishment “in six weeks “ by the October session of the Court. On account of failing health, he was granted a reprieve until the following spring ; but when the authorities learned that people were gathering at his house to

¹⁵ Ibid.p62

¹⁶ w.w.w .google.com :Ameircan.literary.thought.puritanism

*hear him discourse on ... his arrest was issued. Williams fled into the forest in the dead of winter where he wandered for fourteen weeks before he found hospitality among some Indians. From then, he purchased in 1636 the site of the present city of Providence, Rhode Island.*¹⁷ Consequently, the principle of religious tolerance was made fundamental to the covenant that was drawn up between Roger William and all the other believers, in the life of the new colony founded after its leader had been so relentlessly persecuted Charles Lloyd Cohen (1896), while making a few comments on this covenant, meets my adherence in analysing the issue in the following lines:

The Half-way Covenant was a logical impossibility. strictly speaking, there could be no such creature as a “ half-way “ Puritan; and the mere fact that such liberalism was officially approved as early as 1662, less than thirty-five years after the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony , shows how rapidly the ideas of the Puritans were being modified. Of all the emigrations of disaffected groups in the early years of the colony, surely the strangest of all the settling of New Ark, New Jersey, b a group of strict Puritans who had failed in their Attempt to “ purify “ the Puritans Church at New Haven!¹⁸

The first political agreement or compact was modelled, proving indirectly the economic reasons behind the so-called religious movement in the name of Puritanism. The Mayflower as it was baptized, it strictly stipulated the following:

¹⁷ Charles Lloyd Cohen (1896) ‘ *Covenant Psychology in God’s Caress : The Psychology of Puritan religious Experience* (Oxford, New York) p84

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p98

We, those names are underwritten...having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our King and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these ..., and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet [suitable] and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

From William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606-1646*, spelling modernized¹⁹

. Building up a society requires that men and women should call upon God's help and blessing but as the New World offered suitable opportunities for interest-making activities , economic initiatives topped the rank sometimes where church and state were meshed together. The way is still long to explore about the correlation in the kind of Americans as still related to the inconsistencies they cherish among the building of their own history.

3. American Declaration of Independence: Principles and Practices.

3.1. About the hypocrisy of the founding fathers.

You have better food and raiment than in former times: but you have better hearts than your forefathers had? If so, rejoice in that mercy, and let New England t... heavenly than their predecessors, they will doubtless greatly rejoice, and will say, “ This is the generation whom the Lord hath

¹⁹ Carol Berkin , Leonard Wood (1987), *Land of Promise: A History of the United States*, Scott; Foreman and Company, Glenview, Illinois) p63

blessed.” *The Memoirs of Capt. Roger Clapp, Boston, c. 1680*²⁰ The condition of the people can never remain stationary. when not improving they are sinking deeper and deeper into slavery. Eternal vigilance alone can sustain them, and never ceasing exertion is necessary for their social and political improvement.

Frederick Robinson, July 4 speech to Boston Trades Union, 1834²¹

In one place, it is hard to think that the main cause of the abolition of slavery was moral and ethical development.. Knowingly, they continued to speak in favor of abolition, even while constantly giving every practical encouragement to the slave trade. In his book entitled *Capitalism and Slavery*, Dr Eric William while depicting the hypocrisy of abolitionists pointedly mentions: “... *what was the worth of all such high-sounding phrases may be judged from the fact that the British capitalism, even after destroying West Indian slavery, continued to thrive on Brazilian , Cuban and American slavery. So, in the words of Professor Brogan, we get the paradoxes of the reversal of roles. It was all very well for the abolitionists to deplore the use of slave-produced sugar in the West Indies, but no one proposed to stop the use of slave-produced cotton from the Unites States. Indeed, no one proposed seriously to stop the use of the slave-produced sugar from Brazil or Cuba. Money not passion, passion of wickedness or goodness, spun the plot.*”²²

²⁰ *The Memoirs of Capt. Roger Clapp* (written c. 1680 ; printed, Boston, 1731) were reprinted in Alex Young, ed., *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston, 1846). See p.353 for the above quotation, and the following pages for a subtle mixture of grateful satisfaction and critical anxiety. Clapp ran military defenses for the colony.

²¹ Frederick Robinson, *An Oration Delivered Before the Trades Union of Boston and Vicinity* (Boston, 1834), p.320 in the long abridgment by Joseph L. Blau, ed., *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy: Representative Writings of the Period, 1835-1850* (Indianapolis, 1954). Robinson was a Democratic state legislator and party leader in Massachusetts.

²² William, Dr Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p146

The paradox as it could be easily perceived, took a lot longer than we could expect for slavery to end. The double-edged character that was instilled in the mind of the founders seriously impacts on life in general in that land of every body and affected the comprehension we could have around the governing instrument proffered by the Declaration of Independence under the definition of: ***power of the people, for the people and by the people***. Americans finally brought to completion the process to move power from one individual who was the law of the people and their elected representatives , but failed to address righteousness with regard to strict application of the inalienable prerogatives put forward in the Declaration of Independence.

3.2 About controversies on the great inconsistencies.

The hopes placed in the principles were not brought into fruition since inadequate practices once again, were set to suit particular interests, opposites to the windfall said to be in wait for the whole nation. Indeed , over a long period of time , the Constitution was revisited at the federal level as well as the state level. It was brushed up so as to meet the changing needs of the United States , James Madison having declared in accordance with this, “ *In framing a system which we wish to last for ages , we should not lose sight of the changes which ages will produce*”²³. In nutshell , as it has been demonstrated that in America life goes on the way interest goes , the Constitution was in fact designed to serve the interests of the people rich or poor , Southerners and Northerners , farmers , workers and businessmen as well.

Yet , there was in fact a great incongruity between principles and unsound practices noticed in the American society every hour of the day , where temptations were really

²³ Robert A. Ruthland , *The Papers of James Mason* , 1725-92 , Chapel Hill , NC, 1970 , pp 287-289

great to consciously sack the Negro out of the human family. This was plain to see throughout the repeated attempts of southerner pretenders to reach such a conflicting target in a republic said to be a democratic one. In this two-fold and contradicting endeavors, Americans lived right the opposite of what the Declaration said to be equally administered to citizens of all ranks. Here comes indeed, a striking example of how an oppressor can justify his crime by blaming it on the oppressed:

“ when men oppress their fellowmen , the oppressor always finds in the character of the oppressed a full justification of his oppression. Ignorance , depravity and the inability to rise from degradation to civilization and respectability... allegations against the oppressed. The evils most fostered by slavery and oppression are precisely those which slaveholders and oppressors would transfer from their system to the inherent character of their victims. Thus , the very crimes of slavery became slavery’s best defence. By making the enslaved a character fit only for slavery , they excuse themselves for refusing to make the slave a free man”.²⁴

If all men were created equal, if they were “ *born equally free and independent* “ and consequently those words meant that “ *No man is born with a natural right to control any other man , that neither God nor nature recognize , in anticipation , the distinction of bond and free , of despot and slaves* “ , if as John Cooke put it in the Virginia Declaration of 1829 , seeing those distinctions as “ *artificial The work of man,the result of fraud or violence* “ , then one could affirm with no risk of misunderstanding or failure to have a good grasp of the Declaration of Independence that a

²⁴ Ibid

system of slavery in which men were born the subjects and , in truth , the property of others , was by nature wrong. In one word, the same argument that denied Kings an inherited right to rule denied the right of masters born slaves whose status was then determined by birth, not by consent. What a paradox!

Let us not lose sight of the inaccuracy of the Declaration's statement which stipulates and guarantees equality for all. Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, an outspoken nationalist and a well-distinguished personality didn't grant any consideration to the content of such a statement. Believing his words, there was "not a word of truth" in the notion that men were created equal. He increasingly insisted on that in 1848, many years after the death of his uncle who named him after and who was killed by loyalists during the Revolutionary War. His long and distinguished public career (senator, secretary of war, secretary of state and vice-president of the United States) permitted him to grasp a broad view on any matter related to America rather social, political or economic. He was considerably burnt with the desire to defend Southern rights and preserve by all means the nation. This brought him to hold a strong position against the document in whose drafting Thomas Jefferson had taken such a remarkable pride. In 1776, he expressively argued, the Declaration's assertion of human equality was a "hypothetical truism" about man in a state of nature taken from great writers whom revolutionaries sufficiently admired such as John Locke and Algernon Sidney. Instead, that assertion was wrong because men could not live nor survive, much less develop their God given talents. As the later one began to produce destructive consequences on the whole society , impacting on the interests of many and discrediting others mainly the signers of the document who vehemently praised it to be an inspiration of God , Americans had begun by the late 1840's to experience the danger of such a great error in their Declaration of

Independence where the following fragment had been inserted : “ *without any necessity since separation from Britain could have been justified without it* ”. John Calhoun genuinely mentioned it in a clear-cut way in his speech on “ the Oregon Bill, delivered in June 27th , 1848 and entitled *Liberty and Union: The Political Philosophy*.²⁵

Nevertheless, Benjamin Franklin Wade, an outspoken and tough opponent of slavery generally known for his distinguished style and sense of far-fetched patriotism argued that “the *great declaration cost our fathers too dear to be so slightly thrown away by their children*”. Furthermore, did he affirm that “*without the influence of those soul-inspiring principles, it would not have been possible for the patriots of that day to have achieved our independence..... those principles were worth the sacrifice of all else on earth, even life itself*”. Instead, what Benjamin Franklin Wade failed to address is that sacrifice does not mean effectiveness. The most important and widely requested by the large majority of Americans is to suit the action to the word regarding the strict respect of the constitutional requirements. Practices should come along with principles which formerly benefited from the common interest of all the components of the American nation. In face to the practices around the Declaration of Independence, they robbed the revolution of all senseful meaning in line with the inalienable rights and in the same way denied future generations, the mission that inspired their political lives.

Conclusion

The issue of freedom and slavery represents in the history of America, a confusing subject to be fully apprehended in all its

²⁵ ” Speech on the Oregon Bill , June 27th , 1848 “ in Calhoun , *Liberty and Union : The Political Philosophy of John Calhoun* ,ed Ross M. Lence , Indianapolis.

different but manifest facets. The simultaneous development of both freedom and slavery in America before and even after Independence reveals the double-face character of founding fathers as freedom fighters and slave holders already dating back to Virginia: the largest and most influential of the thirteen original colonies.

The American constitutional convention mostly led by Virginians (known as good slave-holding freedom fighters), succeeded in holding the right end of the stick by providing the country with a constitution, which was by the occasion, applauded and welcomed by the vast majority of Americans. The nation as a whole lived under such firm considerations for a long time: during colonial Virginia time as American birth-place of man's labor, the hectic revolutionary era and the reconstruction era. In light of many regards, Americans form a prosperous nation: the mirror of the world regardless of a part of their history, the beginning of which is related to slavery which was going along at the same time with the different revolutions and mainly before and after the founding of the American republic by Virginians who had grown up in the connection: freedom coupled with slavery.

Viewing that human emotions and reactions aren't specific to anyone historical event and considering it as an exploration of conditions that will persist just as long as violence and inequality will continue to flourish in any given society, Charles Dickens' novel entitled "*A Tale of two Cities*", written in 1859, portrays the American case of perfect dichotomy as follows:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the

season of light , it was the season of darkness ,
it was the spring of hope , it was the winter of
despair , we had everything before us , we had
nothing before us , we were all going direct to
Heaven , we were all going direct the other
way.²⁶

The American connection of freedom and slavery stands as a paradox where the rise of liberty and equality was accompanied by the rise of slavery, the two such contradictory developments going on simultaneously from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. In line with the democratic values which that nation endows itself with, such a state of things constitutes with no doubt quite a substandard performance while discrediting in one way or the other the highly granted consideration toward the founding fathers of that special nation.

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²⁶ Charles Dickens (1859) , *A Tale Of Two Cities*.

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