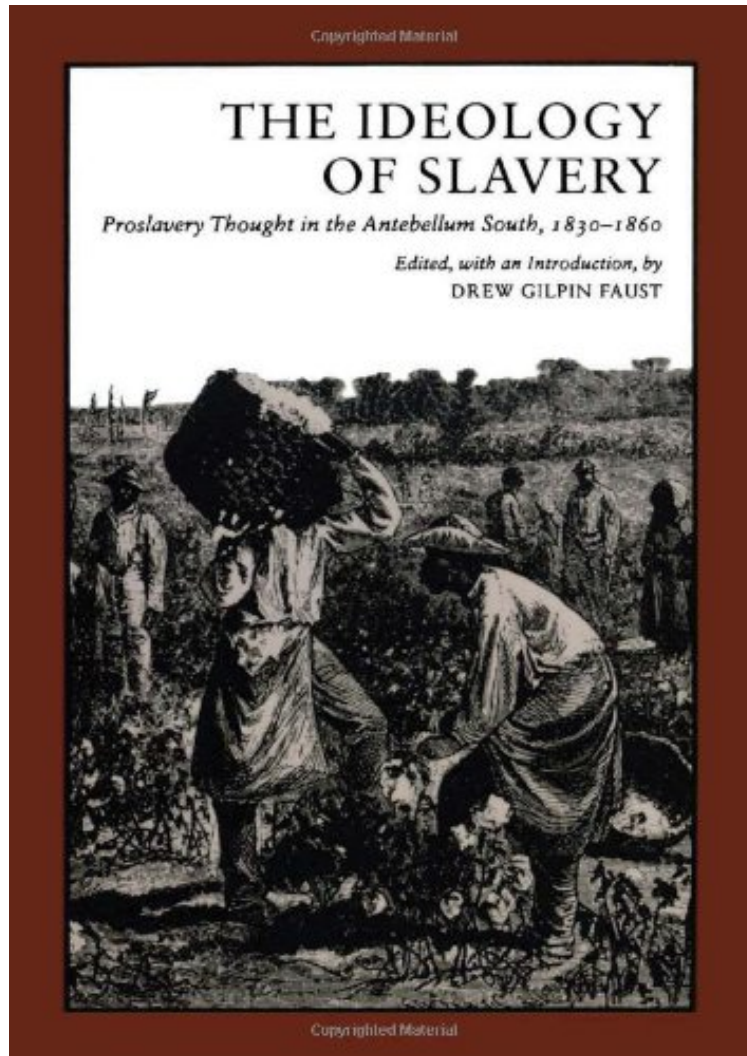


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The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830--1860 (Library of Southern Civilization)

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supporters of slavery. It is, at times, a read that seems so delusional and yet carefully drafted by the writer to support and institution that has and never will have any redeeming elements. It also carries a message of why racism thrives into the America of today. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Antebellum thought By Stewart Cohen Excellent compilation of intellectual ideas from the antebellum south. As the author makes clear, however repugnant the ideals/beliefs of racism are, it is important to examine them openly. This book allows just that among leading intellectuals at the time. 34 of 49 people found the following review helpful. NOT to Be Read for Pleasure! By Gio The seven essays collected in this book, written by Southerners between 1830 and 1860, are unpalatable pompous nonsense for any modern reader except perhaps a "stars-and-bars" Red State neo-confederate. All seven are self-righteous apologies for slavery, on the basis of the authors' interpretation of the Bible showing that the Negro is accursed and that slavery is God's Will. All seven make similar sociological arguments that slavery is a beneficent institution and a necessary component of a well-ordered society, in which some must always serve as the "mudsill." All seven accuse "fanatics," who ought to be tending to their own class of "wage-slaves," of campaigning to disrupt the idyllic social structure of the South, the new Athens. The authors in question are Thomas Roderick Dew, William Harper, Thornton Stringfellow, James Henry Hammond, Josiah Nott, Henry Hughes, and George Fitzhugh. Historians as a profession sometimes need to comb through some awful trash to glean insights into the course of human events. Southern historian Drew Gilpin Faust (now serving time as President of Harvard University) has assembled and edited these essays, not only to hold them as exhibits of the intransigence with which the antebellum South defended its "peculiar institution," but also because she finds evidence in them of a larger cultural paradigm, of a world-view that depended on hierarchy and class consciousness for meaning, of a set of values based on white supremacy that didn't end with defeat in the rebellion of 1861-1865. She explains her hypothesis in a twenty-page introduction to the anthology. She writes: "In recent years... interpretations of proslavery thought have shifted. Perhaps more accustomed to the notion of a timeless and geographically extensive American racism, scholars have begun to place proslavery within a wider context, to regard it as more than simply a distasteful manifestation of collective paranoia gripping the South in the years before the Civil War. Historians have come to view the proslavery argument less as evidence of moral failure and more as a key to wider patterns of beliefs and values. The defense of human bondage... was perhaps more important as an effort to construct a coherent southern social philosophy than as a political weapon..." "The persistence of modern racism is but one forceful reminder of the ways human beings always view the world in terms of inherited systems of belief and explanation that only partially reflect the reality..." "Dispassionate language! Historians are rewarded for such. The dire corollary of Dr. Faust's hypothesis is that at least some segments of the American populace needed and still need "white superiority" to maintain the whole structure of their beliefs and values. If so, woe unto us!

In one volume, these essentially unabridged selections from the works of the proslavery apologists are now conveniently accessible to scholars and students of the antebellum South. The Ideology of Slavery includes excerpts by Thomas R. Dew, founder of a new phase of proslavery militancy; William Harper and James Henry Hammond, representatives of the proslavery mainstream; Thornton Stringfellow, the most prominent biblical defender of the peculiar institution; Henry Hughes and Josiah Nott, who brought would-be scientism to the argument; and George Fitzhugh, the most extreme of proslavery writers. The works in this collection portray the development, mature essence, and ultimate fragmentation of the proslavery argument during the era of its greatest importance in the American South. Drew Faust provides a short introduction to each selection, giving information about the author and an account of the origin and publication of the document itself. Faust's introduction to the anthology traces the early historical treatment of proslavery thought and examines the recent resurgence of interest in the ideology of the Old South as a crucial component of powerful relations within that society. She notes the intensification of the proslavery argument between 1830 and 1860, when southern proslavery thought became more systematic and self-conscious, taking on the characteristics of a formal ideology with its resulting social movement. From this intensification came the pragmatic tone and inductive mode that the editor sees as a characteristic of southern proslavery writings from the 1830s onward. The selections, introductory comments, and bibliography of secondary works on the proslavery argument will be of value to readers interested in the history of slavery and of nineteenth-century American thought.

About the Author Drew Gilpin Faust, associate professor and chairman of the department of American Civilization at the University of Pennsylvania, is the author of *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860*.