



# In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery

By David Brion Davis

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In this broad-ranging book, the pre-eminent authority on the history of slavery meditates on the origins, experience, and legacy of this “peculiar institution.” David Brion Davis begins with a substantial and highly personal introduction in which he discusses some of the major ideas and individuals that have shaped his approach to history. He then presents a series of interlocking essays that cover topics including slave resistance, the historical construction of race, and the connections between the abolitionist movement and the struggle for women’s rights. The book also includes essays on such major figures as Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as appreciations of two of the finest historians of the twentieth century: C. Vann Woodward and Eugene D. Genovese.

Gathered together for the first time, these essays present the major intellectual, historical, and moral issues essential to the study of New World slavery and its devastating legacy.

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### Editorial Review

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Most of these essays are reviews of other writers' work. Although uneven in quality, they constitute an engaging introduction to historians concerned with "our heritage of slavery." An autobiographical introduction frames the book's five parts, which roughly coincide with the categories of the subtitle. Part 1 reviews biographies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King, then turns to Jewish-African American relations in the context of the controversy over Jewish involvement in the slave trade. Parts 2 and 3 discuss historians C. Vann Woodward and Eugene Genovese and consider what in one piece is called "the labyrinth of slavery." Further on in part 3 and in part 4, Davis initiates readers into a lively conversation among historians about relationships between capitalism and slavery and about the complex question of resistance. In part 5, Davis turns to the social construction of race and interrelations among race, class, and gender. He relentlessly resists simplification and maintains a global perspective, but his insistence on complexity doesn't make his work inaccessible. He proves a worthy guide for walking through the labyrinth with open eyes.

*Steven Schroeder*

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### Review

[Davis's] analysis of how religious ideas intertwined with self-interest and other sensibilities to allow Abolitionists to prevail seems masterly. -- *William H. McNeill, New York Review of Books*

### About the Author

David Brion Davis is Sterling Professor of History at Yale University and director of Yale's Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition. His previous books include *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, which won a National Book Award and the Bancroft Prize, and *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* which won a Pulitzer Prize.

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