



# Slavery and American Economic Development (Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History)

*Gavin Wright*

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"Slavery and American Economic Development is a small book with a big interpretative punch. It is one of those rare books about a familiar subject that manages to seem fresh and new." -- Charles B. Dew, Journal of Interdisciplinary History

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Through an analysis of slavery as an economic institution, Gavin Wright presents an innovative look at the economic divergence between North and South in the antebellum era. He draws a distinction between slavery as a form of work organization -- the aspect that has dominated historical debates -- and slavery as a set of property rights. Slave-based commerce remained central to the eighteenth-century rise of the Atlantic economy, not because slave plantations were superior as a method of organizing production, but because slaves could be put to work on sugar plantations that could not have attracted free labor on economically viable terms.

Gavin Wright is William Robertson Coe Professor in American Economic History at Stanford University and the author of *The Political Economy of the Cotton South and Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War*, winner of the Frank L. and Harriet C. Owsley Award of the Southern Historical Association. He has served as president of the Economic History Association and the Agricultural History Society.

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