“Though one of God’s most powerless creatures, I resolved never to be conquered. Alas, for me!”
Christian worldviews in antebellum abolitionist literature
The aim of this research is to compare different depictions of Christian worldviews in three literary texts created by abolitionist authors. This is done by analyzing the religious discourses the authors used to push for the abolishment of slavery during a time when the United States was divided on the issue for both historical reasons and recent developments. The methodological approach used is discourse analysis, as it enables contrasting the works against their societal background and the nation-wide debate that was taking place in the country.

The literary works used in this thesis were all written in the decades preceding the Civil War, between the years 1850-1862. These include Harriet Ann Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Hannah Crafts' The Bondwoman's Narrative and Harriett Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The idea to combine both autobiographical and fictive texts stems from a hypothesis that as the abolition movement did not just have one voice but a cacophony of them, contrasting different types of texts could offer new insights into the abolition movement.

While conducting the research, three themes in particular stood out: how God and his attributes were represented in the texts and what kind of roles He was assigned; how the characters used religious argumentation to promote universal equality and how they based their identities on their understanding of Christianity; and how the authors approached the question about the justification of rebellion. These topics proved remarkably interesting as they were shared by all the three narratives, but the authors had their own clear emphases.

Unlike some earlier studies, this thesis did not find ethnicity to be the most important factor when it came to explaining the different choices the authors made. What was more influential was the way the characters, in the hands of their authors, understood their own identity and autonomy, and how they defined their Christian beliefs and core values. Their personal experiences also played a significant role in the way they constructed their narratives.

Contrasting different genres (autobiographical and fictive) with each other might be considered an unconventional method, but it revealed intriguing details about the diversity of the abolition movement literature and cautioned against setting up constrictive categories between “white” and “black” narratives. While the ethnicity of an author does matter, and it should not be overlooked, this research showed that it was just one factor among many others that influence the style and literary choices of authors. As the scope of this thesis was very limited, analyzing a wider collection of antebellum writings or taking on one of the other “black literature” periods might offer a good starting point for future research.

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Oppiaine: Yleinen kirkkokohistoria
General Church History
Allmän kyrkohistoria
Allmän kyrkohistoria

Tiedostot
Latausmäärä yhteensä: n/a
The war of my life had begun; and though one of God's most powerless creatures, I resolved never to be conquered. - Harriet Ann Jacobs. quotemaster.org. Contact Us. Privacy Policy. Languages. Spanish.