

Jerzy Zajadło

**AMERICAN CONSTITUTION AS A COMPROMISE
– THE EMBARRASSING PROBLEM OF SLAVERY**

The main aim of the article is to discuss the problem of slavery on the basis of the original text of the Constitution of the United States adopted in 1787. According to the Author, the issue is still subject to different interpretations in American constitutional law in the sense that even though slavery was formally abolished under the Thirteenth Constitutional Amendment of 1865, it has not only historical, but also paradigmatic dimension.

The article consists of three main parts. First, the Author discusses three groups of opinions, which occur in contemporary American science, concerning the assessment of the American Founding Fathers' attitude towards slavery: so called prosecutors, vindicators and historicists. The second part is devoted to the complex problem of slavery in the life and works of Thomas Jefferson. The Author refers to various contradictory statements of the author of the Declaration of Independence. Finally, the last section is devoted to the analysis of the provisions of the Constitution of the United States, which directly and indirectly related to slavery. In conclusion, the Author states that in America slavery was not only a complex ethical, economic and social issue, but it also determined the constitutional development of the political and legal system.